COMRADE FISH: MEMORIES OF A MOTSWANA IN THE ANC UNDERGROUND

By Fish Keitseng Compiled by Jeff Ramsay & Barry Morton

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Published
by
Pula Press

First published 1999

© N.T Keitseng, Barry Morton, and Jeff Ramsay

Published by

Pula Press
P O Box 91
Gaborone, Botswana

ISBN 999 12 61 70 2

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Printed by

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INTRODUCTION

"On 20th July following members of SATCU left Lobatse for Mbeya in plane chartered from Bechuanaland Safaris: - Mary Manyosi, Moti Ranka, Richard Tabela.

Flight paid for by SATCU and arrangements made by Jona Matlou mentioned on p. 4 of attachment to your S. 780 III of 20 June 1960, and at present living in Lobatse. Party accompanied by Fish Keitseng.

Party stated they were going to unknown destination in Tanganyika for 12 to 18 months trade union training course but gave impression of being in considerable ignorance of true destination and purpose of journey.

Plane returned on 23rd July and request landed at Kanye. Passengers were Keitseng and Nelson Mandela. Mandela proceeded directly to Johannesburg. No indication that S.A.P were aware of his arrival."

Peter Fawcus, Resident Commissioner Bechuanaland Protectorate, to Sir John Maud, High Commissioner and Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa, via Secret "UK Eyes Only" Telex – 24th July 1962.[1]

With the end of political apartheid and the African National Congress's rise to power in South Africa, the history of its liberation struggle can now be more fully told by its participants. Nelson Mandela has led the way with his own autobiography, which is one of several by leading ANC members.[2] The role played by Botswana citizens within the ANC is relatively obscure, notwithstanding the publication of autobiographies by two such participants, Michael Dingake and Motsamai Mpho.[3]

Without detracting the contributions of others, there can be no doubt that Fish Keitseng was one of the key Motswana members of the ANC during the early 1960s. After extensive involvement in the ANC's passive resistance campaigns of the 1950s, he was arrested by the South African authorities and prosecuted in the Treason Trial, along with Mandela, Mpho, and 153 other leading ANC members. Following his deportation to his native Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1959, he established and successfully ran an underground transit system, which funnelled ANC members from Lobatse in the southern Protectorate to Northern or sometimes Southern Rhodesia (later Zambia and Zimbabwe), from where they journeyed to Tanganyika/Tanzania. This operation was of vital importance for it enabled the ANC, along with its Congress Alliance allies, to rescue thousands of activists from the clutches of the Apartheid State. This in turn allowed for the reestablishment of the organisation from exile as a liberation movement capable of ultimately assuming state power.

Keitseng's part in this drama might have been forgotten. Until apartheid's final demise he had neither the capacity nor the desire to draw public attention to his deeds unlike the previously mentioned luminaries, he never received any formal education and cannot write with great proficiency. His self-taught English is fluent but colloquial. He was also long viewed with suspicion, if not hostility, by the Botswana authorities, who were never especially comfortable with home grown trans-national freedom fighters. His consuming commitment to the struggle, and the petty persecutions

that he suffered as a result, made it hard for him to keep a steady job. Being involved in underground activities he furthermore, long valued his relative anonymity. It also seems clear that a number of observers in the past, having come into contact with this unlettered peasant-proletarian, simply underestimated his importance. In the existing literature Keitseng's name is often not tied to his contributions. Thus Ronnie Kasrils, in describing his escape from South Africa in 1963, writes the following, after being picked up near Lobatse in a Land Rover by some unnamed "comrades":

"We drove to a township outside Lobatse and were carried into a house, wrapped in blankets. They explained that they had to be vigilant about South African agents.... In order to travel safely to Tanzania, where the ANC had its headquarters, we needed to report our arrival to the District Commissioner.... We were granted political asylum and photographed.... We spent a week [and] finally departed in a six-seater aircraft for Tanzania.[4]"

Although Kasrils does not say so, he was being looked after by Keitseng, who arranged his pickup, safe house, legal assistance, and transport over an entire week. Similarly, other ANC colleagues have downplayed Keitseng's role. AnnMarie Wolpe's otherwise quite detailed account of her husband Harold's escape through Botswana neglects any mention of Fish.[5] Mpho, who, as we shall see, fell out with Keitseng in 1965 in the aftermath of Botswana's first election, only acknowledges him in passing, while Dingake, whose book came out in 1985, was scrupulous not to give away any information that might have comprised the still ongoing struggle.

Keitseng's life as a migrant worker and grassroots union organiser, as well as his lack of schooling, further set him apart from most other leading ANC activists of his generation. When he initially became involved in politics he was still very much the product of his rural background, having grown up at his father's cattlepost. After going to South Africa just before the Second World War to work in the mines, he began to acquire a militant working class consciousness not shared by many Batswana migrants. Later leaving the mines, he stayed on to work in Johannesburg, usually without the right papers, moonlighting as both a union and ANC activist. Yet, notwithstanding his commitment to South Africa's liberation, Keitseng has never forgotten his roots in Botswana's soil. If apartheid was a fire that threatened to consume his neighbour's house, as a Motswana he knew his neighbours were his brothers and sisters. Moreover, Batswana could never be free while South Africans were enslaved.

Parallel to Keitseng's contributions to the ANC underground, was his significant role in the promotion of both organised labour and nationalist politics inside Botswana. He was a founding father of the Bechuanaland Trade Union Congress (BTUC), as well as the People's Party (BPP), the Independence Party (BIP) and the National Front (BNF). For various reasons these organisations (along with Keitseng) became marginalised by the end of the 1960s, though the BNF was to emerge as Botswana's principal opposition movement. By then the ANC presence within Botswana had also declined. Members of Botswana's relatively conservative post-colonial government, as well as the apartheid regime, still kept Comrade Fish under surveillance.

After Botswana's independence Keitseng thus remained as something of a pariah to Botswana's officials. He also lived in very difficult circumstances, surviving as an unskilled labourer while struggling to educate his children. Despite rejection and lack of material success, Keitseng was intransigent in his principled devotion to his cause. In the low-income neighbourhoods of Lobatse and Gaborone where he has lived, he has always been a local hero. To go walking around with him in these communities is to gain a deeper understanding of the word "popularity".

After years of poverty, persecution, and frustration, Keitseng has begun to receive wider recognition. In 1989 he was elected as a Gaborone City councillor, and when Nelson Mandela came to Botswana after his release it was Comrade Fish whom he called for. Members of Botswana's political leadership, perhaps ashamed of past slights, now treat him as a respected elder statesman.

For all his rough times, Keitseng has always retained a remarkably positive outlook on life. As he approaches his eighth decade he remains an unembittered and ever humble servant of the people, who has never considered compromising the values that he learned as a youthful activist. An ordinary man who, through his dogged commitment, made extraordinary contributions, Keitseng has lived a life worthy of remembrance.

The Growth of Nationalism in Botswana, and background

Keitseng's life is part of the wider history of nationalism in Botswana. Today almost all citizens of Botswana consider themselves to be members of a nation. There are good reasons why they should think this way. Schools in Botswana have instilled nationalist values. Organised national events, government propaganda, and the media have also spread this message. But the fact that this form of identification is now second nature should not blind us to the realisation that it is a very recent condition. Before 1960 people in this country rarely considered mobilising themselves on a national basis, and never identified themselves as "Batswana" in the modern sense of the word. It took a special breed of person who could stop making people think of themselves as Bangwaketse or Bakalanga first, and instead get them to imagine themselves as part of a much larger Batswana nation. Fish Keitseng was one of these people.

The idea of nationalism developed slowly during the course of the twentieth century. Historians have traced its beginning back to the early part of the colonial era, when the various *Dikgosi* began to co-operate in order to oppose certain initiatives made by the British colonisers of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. An example of this was in 1895 when Khama III, Sebele I, and Bathoeñ I travelled to England to persuade the British government not to allow Cecil Rhodes and his British South Africa Company to take over the Protectorate. All nations believe in various historical legends and myths, and Batswana believe that Queen Victoria, or *Mmamosadinyana*, promised to protect the Chiefs from white settlers. While this story is largely mythical, it remains popular. The co-operative effort of the *Dikgosi* suggests that even a hundred years ago people in this country thought of themselves as "Batswana". Thus, because

people today think of the nation in the modern sense, they assume that this was the case in the past.

Certain *Dikgosi* went on working together after 1895 in a way that went beyond mere tribal affairs. Beginning in 1909, many of the Chiefs came together at times to oppose the transfer of the Bechuanaland Protectorate to the Union of South Africa. All the *Dikgosi* of the time preferred to be under the British government rather than the racist settlers of South Africa. From 1909 until the late 1950s, the *Dikgosi* spoke out against repeated attempts by the South African government to take control of their country. Bathoeñ I (1889-1910) of the Bangwaketse and Tshekedi Khama (1926-50) of the Bangwato were especially adept at doing this. At other times, when the British wished to reduce the powers of the *Dikgosi* and give themselves greater control over the lives of the Batswana, the Chiefs also co-operated to oppose these efforts. Bathoeñ II (1928-69) and Tshekedi Khama, for instance, sued the High Commissioner in 1936 in an important case.

But we should not confuse such co-operation by the various leaders of the past with the concept of nationalism. Men like Bathoeñ I saw himself as a Mongwaketse first. It would have been inconceivable for him to envision a common identity with Bakgalagadi, Bakalanga, and Bakgatla. Tshekedi Khama, meanwhile, thought that Basarwa were inferior, and believed that the Bangwato also had seniority over the Bakalanga, Batswapong, Bakgalagadi, and others who made up the majority of the population that he governed. Like many of the Batswana *Dikgosi*, he was primarily concerned with maintaining the right of Batswana *merafe* to control the many peoples that they had conquered in the past. He was thus primarily focused on the internal politics of his *morafe*.

As long as education and transportation were poorly developed in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, it meant that it was difficult for people to conceive of a picture that transcended their local areas. The first individuals to propose nationalist ideas were in fact those who had been well educated and who had travelled and thus had a wider outlook on life. Perhaps the first group of people to propose something close to nationalist ideas were a small group based in Serowe in the late 1920s who called themselves the "Progressive Party," or "The Intellectuals". This group of twenty or so men were opponents of Tshekedi Khama, who believed that educated Africans should no longer be ruled by traditional laws and customs. In 1930 they published a petition calling for the abolition of certain practices such as flogging and the use of regiments (*mephato*) by the *Dikgosi*. Although they were crushed by Tshekedi and his men, the leaders of the Progressive Party, Moana R Segolodi and K.T. Motsete, put forward a semi-nationalist outlook to a public which rejected most of what they said. Segolodi, though, in 1931, was able to write:

"An insistent plea for freedom echoes from tribe to tribe with increasing intensity. We have entered the era forecast in the prophecy, and, previous to this period slavery was regarded as inevitable, as proper, and even as necessary to tribal well-being. But now, a radical change in conviction has been brought. The inhabitants of the Protectorate realise and believe there must be another way to induce and to oblige the

tribes to settle their disputes without slashing one another's throats. They believe in the unity of all the peoples in the consciousness of their common interest in the maintenance of a just peace....[6]"

Another Mongwato who held similar views at this time was Simon Ratshosa. Himself the son of one of Khama III's daughters, Ratshosa in his early years was an aristocrat who wore fancy clothes and controlled educational affairs for his *Kgosi*. Always looking to gain maximum power for himself, he and his brother were behind a Bangwato Tribal Council which sought to advise *Kgosi* Tshekedi Khama, who in 1926, ended the council and demoted Ratshosa. Matters eventually came to a head when Simon and his brother Johnny tried to shoot Tshekedi in his *kgotla*. After serving a prison sentence for attempted murder, and being exiled to Francistown, Simon Ratshosa dropped his aristocratic Ngwato demeanour and became more nationalist in his thinking. For instance, he called for the training of all the peoples of the country, and not just the children of the Tswana elites:

"Education in relation to lower tribes under Native Chiefs must be thought out and fearlessly applied.... Racialism which ranks as patriotism must be exposed, and a great charter of freedom and equality must be proclaimed. There must be no room for partial distinction, and we are all under the same flag and in Jesus Christ. In every part of the British Colonies, the motto is "equal rights" but nowhere is this duty at present so urgent as in Bechuanaland Protectorate.... all tribes [should] get same educational privileges.... It seems there are great possibilities with these downtrodden and at present feckless people [such as the Bayei and Babirwa] should they be assisted. The feudal lords, Bamangwato, Bakwena, Bangwaketse and Batawana, do everything in their power not to lose freehold over their subjects....[7]"

Segolodi, Motsete, Ratshosa, and their compatriots of this time never quite managed to make the leap to a fully-fledged nationalism. None of them ever foresaw an independent Botswana, and what they wanted was for the British government to grant educated Batswana the right to live under British laws and not under traditional laws. They wanted educated men to have the right to take part in politics, so that the monopoly on power by the *Dikgosi* would be ended. Ratshosa died in 1939. Segolodi returned to his native Ngamiland where he became a conservative Batawana tribalist. Motsete ended up teaching in a Johannesburg township. As these men vanished from the scene, so too nationalism as a concept faded for some time.

But when we look at the profiles of these men, who introduced nationalist ideas unsuccessfully in the 1920s and 1930s, we can see certain features that later on were crucial in the era leading up to independence. First, all three lived for long periods away from their homes. Moanaphuti Segolodi was exiled from Ngamiland by his Chief in 1925, and became radical while living in Kanye and Serowe. Motsete was a Motalaote who was educated in South Africa and then earned a BA in England. Ratshosa was also South African-educated, and lived in exile for the last thirteen years of his life. Torn away from their families and traditions, they were all exposed to new ideas and identities.

Another crucial aspect of their behaviour was their unwillingness, often before leaving home, to follow conservative customs. Segolodi and Ratshosa, for instance, were paid large salaries by their Chiefs and spent their money lavishly rather than using it on cattleposts. They wore flashy clothing that angered racist Europeans and provoked envy from conservative Batswana. They liked European food and drink, and built European-style houses rather than live in traditional roundavels. They liked speaking English and flaunting their good accents. Motsete was less flamboyant, but after returning from England he found life in Serowe backward and adopted many aspects of British culture. All three were devoted Christians. So nationalism as a new ideology went hand in hand with a cultural and behavioural package that was definitely at odds with custom and tradition.

Nationalist ideas re-emerged in the 1950s. Tshekedi and Bathoeñ II joined other *dikgosi* in trying to unite the various *merafe* in a "Federated African Authority." Bathoeñ also showed an interest in such symbolic measures as a national flag and the new national holiday called "Protectorate Day". In 1959 another Mongwato exile named Leetile Raditladi formed the first nationalist political party, named the Federal Party, in Francistown. Raditladi was another highly educated and westernised man who had distinguished himself as the leading Setswana poet and playwright of his time. He conceived of the various *merafe* in the country as provinces of a future independent country, and organised various celebrations promoting a new national identity. For all these efforts, the aloof, intellectual, tennis-playing Raditladi did not move the masses. Nor did Bathoeñ's efforts provoke a mass response initially.

The greatest nationalist spark was the formation of the Bechuanaland Peoples Party in 1960 by Motsete and Motsamai Mpho—soon joined by the charismatic Philip Matante.[8] Mpho, a Moyei from Ngamiland, had left home in 1948 for South Africa, where he became a dedicated ANC activist. Imprisoned in South Africa and eventually deported, he returned to live at Palapye in order to form a party based on non-ethnic principles. There he linked up with the ageing Motsete (the author of Botswana's national anthem) who was used as a front man by the young Mpho. Philip Matante, who will play an important role in this book, came to the scene in early 1961 when Motsete brought him into the BPP. An ex-soldier from Serowe known originally as "Madande", he typifies the way in which nationalists rejected their traditional background. After returning to southern Africa after a stint in World War II, he migrated to South Africa and made his way in the township underworld. Allegedly he lived a double life as a gangster and police informant.[9] The BPP's nationalist inspiration came from the ANC example in neighbouring South Africa. Not only were the BPP's ideas and constitution derived from the ANC, but its hardcore activists had all been ANC members while working as migrants in South Africa. The movement successfully brought the idea of Botswana made up of a single "Batswana" people to a wide audience.

Although the early nationalists brought powerful new ideas to the fore, they never managed to capture control of the country whose identity they helped to create. Weak in organisational skills, their rhetoric repelled the majority of those who would vote in

decline, even though the day-to-day activities of the Keitseng family may not have reflected this trend. A significant number of families sought to educate at least some of their sons and daughters at the Kanye primary school. The Keitseng males, though, were among the more traditional-minded Bangwaketse who took little interest in the benefits of literacy, which seemed to be divorced from the life that they lived. Keitseng's parents ran a diversified peasant household, engaging in various combinations of cattle raising, the growing of cereals, and craft making. In this respect his father's consistent ambition was to have his family members work independently for themselves rather than for others. Apparently he achieved this goal most of the time, and Keitseng senior appears to have answered to no man. Why should he have prepared his sons for a life that was any different from his own?

Fish Keitseng was the first born son in his family, a situation within Tswana households that combines a potent mix of responsibilities and rewards. Eldest sons in Tswana society have generally been conditioned to eschew their own individuality, being groomed instead to acquire the talents and attitude necessary to direct a household. A first-born son will become aware of these expectations very early. The burden of meeting them is generally compensated for by the inheritance the first-born receives, for he will come to control the family land and the greater part of its cattle wealth. In addition to material wealth, the first-born can expect to go through life with more social status than his siblings do, and he will be pushed, admired, and often spoilt by his relatives and neighbours.

A price commonly paid by first-born sons in the past was that they did not attend school, but instead spent their childhood's herding cattle for their fathers. Keitseng, like his near-contemporary, Sir Ketumile Masire,[14] was packed off to the cattlepost at around the age of seven, leaving his mother and the comforts of village life behind. Whereas Masire was able, at the age of thirteen, to enter school due to fortuitous circumstances, Keitseng remained at the cattle post until adulthood.

Perhaps the most crucial thing one can discern from Keitseng's narrative about his childhood is his sheer lack of interest in his past family life and of his apparent unwillingness to become the dutiful first-born son. In this respect, Keitseng resembles his colleague Motsamai Mpho, who also abandoned inherited cattle and household duties for a higher calling.

"I am Fish Keitseng from Kanye. I was born at Kanye. I am not much at giving interviews, but I will try. You know, you get old, you forget everything. If I forget a story, I just dream at night. Then when I wake up I say, "I remember that one!"

I don't say that I am the greatest man around, because I am not educated. But I know that if I get to the road, I will follow it, without any question. Nobody will stop me. My real name is Ntwaesele Thatayone Keitseng, but they also call me Fish. Fish is just a name from the boys. At the mines, they can just give you any name, they don't care.

My father was Malau, the age-regiment of *Kgosi* Seepapitso II, son of Bathoeñ I.[15] He was not educated, he was a man of cattle. When he was young he once went to

Kimberly to work in the mines, and later on I found him with a lot of cattle. But he was a tailor, and I still wonder today where he learned this tailoring. It was not clothing like we wear now, but was made from the skins of goats and wild animals. He didn't have a gun to get skins with. He had dogs, which used to go chase these animals, and also, he had many traps, which could get skins, while he just sat in his yard. My father liked traps very much. He was also often making shoes from such skins. From these skins he could cut trousers, or a suit. I'm sure there is still a suit he made for Bathoeñ II[16] in Kanye. He made these shoes for Bathoeñ because Bathoeñ was his son according to the regiment. As the son of Seepapitso II, Bathoeñ II called Malau members his "fathers". My father could also make chaps. He never went to school, so I don't know where he got this idea to make clothes and shoes. A lot of things he could do without going to school. Nobody taught him these things, he just taught himself. He could just measure your size and make the things. To make clothes he took quite a long time, because he was just using his hands. To make a pair of trousers he could take about a month. Very slow, and maybe he got two pounds or three pounds in payment.

My father's name was Thatayayone, which meant "Through God I am alive." My grand grandfather was Modisenyane, whose son is Keitseng, who was the father of Thatayayone. Our list of ancestors is very long. My grand grandfather was the same as Masire's.[17] Masire's grand grandfather married at the same place as Modisenyane.

Grandfather Keitseng was a transport rider. He used to drive his ox wagon from Kimberly to Bulawayo. At the time the railway ran from Cape to Kimberly. From there my grandfather would carry things in his wagon up to Rhodesia. Along the way he would stop to replace his oxen with fresh ones. He had a cattlepost near Otse where he would shift his beasts. My grandfather had many cattle, but he lost them due to *bolowane*.[18]

My mother was not educated. She was called Mamagabala. But my two sisters, Mosetsanagape and Sekawanyana, went to school. I was just a person who taught myself. It was the same with my two brothers Tholego and Tshipi. We boys didn't go to school. My mother liked to read the bible very much. But I never used to pay any notice. I only just became a member of a church for the first time recently. Things can shift. You can have a front wheel on your car, tomorrow you can put the back wheel on the front. You see what I mean? God he can change us. God is always watching us, to see if we are doing good things or bad things. He might just change you. I was not much interested in the church as a young man, but now I am. These young chaps at the church, they like me very much, like a father. I am trying to be straightforward with God, because I have made many corruptions as a young man.

I just grew up at the cattlepost. I went there when I was very young, because I was the first born. My father just had one *moraka*, because he had cattle, but not too many. He had forty, eighty, somewhere there. It was in Tshaawe, east of Kanye, near the railway line. When the train passed we used to hear it chugging by.

Before I went to the mines I stayed there all the time. I was staying there with my cousin, my mother's brother's son, until I grew up. We used to look after cattle, milk the cows, milk the goats. Then we would cook *bogobe*.[19] When my cousin went home, my father gave him cattle, according to Tswana custom. When a chap is growing up with your cattle, you must give him three or four cattle to take to his home. He was not going with empty hands.

At times I would visit the family in Kanye, which did not look like it does today. It is becoming like a city these days. When I was a boy there were few European houses there, but one place I admired was Rowland's compound. He was a big trader [20] who had a nice house with all sorts of things. I would admire his motor vehicles, and then began to know that *makgoa* lived differently from us.

I liked the cattlepost much. Even today, when I am old, I like it, even if you have just five or ten cattle. They'll grow into many. You like to see that your cattle are having kids, and when they have babies you must be there watching. Then after they are born you must take them inside the kraal so the jackals won't eat them.

To castrate the bulls, we used to take a knife, and cut the testicles, going through the tendons. It would take about four or five days to complete. These days they use machines for castration. After Hitler's war the Europeans brought these things and taught us, but before we were using the knife. That was long ago, even before I went to the mines.

Living at the cattle post was fine, but today I no longer think about it. These things, long ago I have forgotten them."

This is practically all that Keitseng is willing to remember about his childhood, spent out at the bush with his father's cattle and a few other companions. Some time in 1939, though, having reached his tax-paying years, he decided to go off to South Africa and work in the gold mines. By then, it was very common for young men to go off to South Africa and work, and in the southern Protectorate about 75 per cent of men did so at some point in their lives.[21] Most worked there on and off for a number of years, before finally settling down to marriage and peasant life by their fourth decade. Keitseng, for all he knew, was on the same track as his peers:

"When you are at the cattlepost, you can see guys your size coming back from Johannesburg. They say, "We have got money," and what not. Then you go as well. We thought at that time the mine was something important. It was nothing important,

because you were going to work hard underground, and some people were dying there.

The first time I was in a motor vehicle was when I got my first contract [22] at Kanye, at the place called Kgomoetlhaba, when we got on the bus to go to Lobatse. There we found another big bus going to Zeerust, and then went from there by train to Johannesburg (later when I took my third contract, I found that road was closed and we went by train—Lobatse-Mafikeng-Zeerust-Johannesburg). When we were in the train going there the first time we thought we were in the same country as we came from, but then when we arrived we saw that Johannesburg was so different, and the people were so different, from the things we were used to.

We went to this place, Moselekatse, a big yard where everybody arrived from all over. The next day, we got up, and they called us by name and made us form lines. Doctors came and stuck us here and there, We spent maybe two days there, and then I was sent to Roodepoort No. 5, my first mine. I was going to stay for 9 months, but when that was over I wasn't tired so I took two extra months and then came home.

When we went to the mines we found many Batswana there. Fifty or sixty from Kanye were there. Some guys were going to Johannesburg all the time, and there were four buses going to Zeerust a week. At that time we weren't going by Mafikeng line, we just went straight to Zeerust, and then we went to the mine by train from Zeerust. This was the Native Recruiting Corporation.

The food at the mines was not that bad. We were eating porridge and meat. Sometimes we were drinking Tswana liquor, *bojalwa*. I was never hungry. We were happy when we were eating, because we didn't know that there is any special nice food for somebody. We thought that the food they gave us was the food for everybody. We didn't know that the *makgoa* didn't eat that stuff. We used to eat everything they gave us, and we liked it.

When we were in the mines, we were sleeping there on cement beds like as if we were on the floor. There were four of them, one on top of the other. When we got up we had to hold something going down. Every room was like that.

I am going to say something harsh, but I am not trying to insult anyone. When you get in the mine, you are still a fresh little boy, and the old men in the mine want to make you into a wife. But I was too stubborn to be somebody's woman. Another chap who lives near me today, was the head boss boy where I was sleeping. First he gave me an easy job, saying I must just open a big door for other tramps coming in and out of the mine. He was liking me and wanting me to become his *nkoshana*, his little boy to sleep with him there. I refused him completely, and then he got fed up. When I refused him they took me from my easy job and made me go push the *golofana*.[23] I didn't know that

they were punishing me, but I was tough but I got used to it. Later on I found that I was more powerful than anyone else was there. These old men thought they were making me soft so I would sleep with them, but they were making me more tough instead. I was a difficult somebody. My age mates, they used to do these things with these older men. I refused, saying I was not going to do it. Those men didn't know what to do with me after I began pushing those carts. What could they do to me, because I could load or push the *golofana*—the toughest job?

When I came home from the mine I began to start paying *lekgetho*.[24] You went first, and then you paid afterwards, now because you have your own money in the pockets. Next I bought clothes for myself, and when I came home I gave my parents the rest of the cash. My father then called my [maternal] uncle, my *malome*,[25] and he came and opened the trunks with my clothing. He took a shirt; I also give him one pants. Then he said I could continue, as I like. That was a law among the Batswana. When you were working at the mine, you were working with your parents, and when you come back you would help your *malome* and your parents.

After giving clothes to my Uncle I copied the Tswana custom and just gave my parents the rest of my money, about £9. They then bought some cattle with my money. According to Tswana custom, I am the first-born, so those cattle belonged to my father and mother, but I was also part of it. If I needed to sell one for money, I just asked my father. He allowed me to do that several times.

After some months I went to the mine again, and signed up at Lobatse, because the NRC compound was right near our cattle post. I finished my contract, and stayed for extra time, because we liked Johannesburg so much. Then I came home again, and met my father coming from *masimo*, bringing the crops home. After I got my pay from NRC, I went to see my father at home, and he called my uncle again, who lived right next door to us. Then I gave them clothes and money. I don't know what kind of taxation this was. It was taxation, an agreement between Batswana."

When Keitseng returned from his second contract in late 1941, the Bechuanaland Protectorate was mobilising for W.W.II. Leading Chiefs in the Protectorate like Tshekedi Khama of the Bangwato and Keitseng's Kgosi, Bathoeñ II, were trying hard to recruit soldiers for the British war effort. This was due to the long-standing possibility of the British transferring its control of the Protectorate to the overtly racist South African government, a prospect that the Batswana loathed. Hence, Batswana chiefs went all out during the war to prove their "loyalty" to the Crown.[26]

When Keitseng returned from the mines Bathoeñ II was recruiting soldiers from his age-mates, many of whom were extremely reluctant to sign up to fight in a war they little understood. Large numbers took mine contracts, or fled into the bush whenever the Chief's men came into the area. Keitseng, like these men, had no interest in the war, but

unlike most of his contemporaries who avoided conscription by subterfuge, he was up front in his opposition. It was in this encounter with his *Kgosi*, a man who would ultimately become his political colleague, that he made his first ever-public stand. As such it gives a clear picture of the kind of activist that he later became:

"When I was working in the mine, at Roodeport, during my second contract, people said they were going home to go fight. I said, "What you going to fight for? Who you are fighting?"

They said, "The Chief says we must go to the war."

I said no. I was going home after my contract, but I was preparing myself to refuse. On the way back, guys from Kanye were getting off the train early, like at Pitsane and Ramotswa, so they could get into Kanye quietly without the army catching them. After getting off the train we had to get on this bus owned by the chief called 'Sekalaba', which would take us to Kanye. But I was the only one left, even though many Bangwaketse started at Jo'burg with me. I was the only one going to go straight into town. I went home, and my father arrived that night with a wagon, with oxen, with some firewood. They were coming from ploughing, and removing some wood from the ground. So I stayed with him that night.

My father started to talk about the war. He said the *Kgosi* knew about it. The next day he went to the cattle post again. After I got my money from the NRC I went to give my father the money. He said, "Did these guys see you, Chief Bathoeñ and others, because they want you to go to war? Anyway, you are going to answer for yourself."

I decided to go to Kanye to be inspected for the army. I went the next day with two old men, both relatives, including my grandfather. The people, young guys and their relatives, were full in the kgotla. One guy says, *"my people, I ran away from going to the war. I have been enlightened."* Hey, I was angry to hear this. What was this guy running for? I was telling people there that I was also refusing to join.

Later, they brought me to speak to Bathoeñ. They said, "Here is another one [who is refusing to go] Chief."

I told him, *" I am not going to the war, my lord"*

"Why?"

"Because I do not know who is fighting who, and for what."

Then he became afraid I was going to influence these other guys, so he said, *"Okay boy. I shall see you."*

Later that day, we were standing around, and he came to join us. Then he said to me, "Why are you asking such questions? You are influencing other people to refuse."

I said, "No, I am not prepared to go to war. I want to know who is fighting, and for what." I didn't know what I was supposed to be fighting for.

He tried to send some of my age mates to tell me I must go to the war, but I said no. I never went there. Much later, when Bathoeñ joined us in the BNF, he said to me, "You little boy, one time you asked me a very funny question. Why did you ask me what we were fighting for? I didn't know also."

Bathoeñ was straightforward. When you argued with him, he didn't want you to do it in public, he wanted you to be alone with him.[27] I remember one day we were called by one European guy, he was making bricks. He had already talked to Bathoeñ. We were going to be hired by this European. I got there, and the European said, "*Voetsak*, go back. I can't hire a native with cheek" I left. Bathoeñ told that chap earlier that I was going to influence the people there.

One day after that they sent for my age mates, and they came for my regiment to come and do labour. I said, "I have no *mophato*. The father of my grandfather, he is the size of those guys, but I am still young." I refused to go there to join up with them.

They said, "But you are our size, man."

"You can go if you like. I am not going there."

Another day they come to my house. "Man, we want to see you. Why you don't want to go to *mophato*."

"I am too young. If you guys want to go there, you can go."

One day they went to the chief, and said I was refusing. He told them that I am their size that they can talk to me. But I never went there until Bathoeñ died. Even now I don't know my *mophato*.

Bathoeñ was very clever. If he saw that a chap was wise, he just let him go. He did not use force against me."[28]

CHAPTER TWO

Becoming a worker: Life in the mines and on the rand, 1942-53

Most migrant workers from the Protectorate or other foreign territories took little interest in South African politics or in union activities. The reason why migrants lacked any larger sense of worker consciousness is not well known, but probably relates to the desire of most men to return to their homes and resume peasant life. Keitseng, who does not appear to have taken any great delight in the rural existence of his parents, was different.

Keitseng's involvement in trade union was precipitated by the rhetoric of J.B. Marks. The latter, a Moscow-educated African member of both the ANC and the Communist Party, was a key organiser of the African Mine Workers Union (AMU) in 1941. In turn the AMU was closely linked to the ANC and the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU). Marks regularly addressed miners on their Sunday rest days for the AMU. This union, which Keitseng joined, was eventually broken after it got 75,000 men to respond to a series of work stoppages in August 1946.

In the aftermath of these strikes, which were brutally suppressed, Keitseng left the mines and sought work on the Rand. For the next decade, he was involved in union activities as a member of the unions affiliated with the CNETU and its later offshoot the South African Congress of Trade Unions [SACTU]. His story at this time is typical of that of a young man making his way in urban South Africa—he lived in cheap township housing, moved frequently between employers, and managed to stay several steps ahead of the pass law officers.

"The third time I took a contract, I went to Roodepoort No. 6, and then to Crown Mine, 14 Shaft, which was where I was influenced by the Trade Union activists. J.B. Marks was organising all the mines, and he held the meetings outside the compound, on Sunday. J.B. Marks, had been in Russia, for three or four years, training in trade unions. He was a very powerful man for South African workers, because he was a real leader but also because he was a real teacher. He would say to us, "I am coming to tell you that you are working in very dangerous position underground, but you are not paid. So organise yourselves in the trade unions."

The manager at the compound door tried to refuse to let us go hear Marks, but we always said we were going to buy bread.

He was the first man who organised me, and later John Nkadimeng[29] organised me when I worked in construction. Marks would go to the mine, asking permission to talk. If they refused, he sent a message to the workers. We listened, and listened, not saying anything, not even asking any questions. But something was cooking in our stomachs and our hearts. That's why I was for trade unions.

One day, he was addressing us in Newclare. The people had not yet arrived, and only two people were there. The police came, and they asked him why he was addressing two people only. He says, "It's none of your business. This is our business, whether we are a million or whatever, we know what we are talking about." These chaps went back to the police station, and when they returned there was a big crowd there. Fred Modiba was the chairman of the meeting. He stopped someone speaking, he said, "Just wait. You guys, you were here before, telling us we are only two. We are not two, we are so many, and we will get bigger until the government falls."

Those policemen just laughed, and they went away again.

One time J.B. Marks organised a stay-at-home at the mine. We were not going underground, demanding £1 a day, instead of one shilling sixpence. This was when I was at Crown Mine. Some people died. The police came with horses and sticks, and they would kick the doors and then come inside the rooms and hit you with sticks. They had trained the horses to kick down doors! They would ride up to your building and the horses would turn around and kick your door down with its back legs.

The first time I saw Nelson Mandela was when I was in the mines. I saw him addressing the meetings, and he would touch our hearts. Somebody told me that when Mandela left school he went to work in the mine as a *machingilane*—security guard. He used to look after people, and when he searched Africans his white bosses were very pleased. But then, one time when he stopped one European, they started querying: "Why you touch the boss?" So Mandela says, "No, man, this is nonsense." And he left the job. He thought he was entitled to arrest anybody who was destroying things or stealing.

After finishing at Crown Mine I took another contract and I went to Geduld, where I said I didn't want to work underground. Before that I was a person called a *Kokopana*, just pushing a truck underground. These people are also called Tramps. You take all these stones that are in the mine, and push them along a train track. That is the job I was doing for most of my contracts.

When I went to Geduld, so I was working service on top. It was only for a four-month contract. We were collecting stones on these big belts, getting the right stones, which had gold in them. When I finished 9 months I went home. From home I came for the last contract, at Luipaard's Vlei. Then there are some people who are right on top, which was my job at Luipaard's Vlei. It was called *mapandration*, there were big pipes that were putting wind into the mine. From the top, they put wind inside the entire mine. You know your car, when you open the window. Don't want to get hot, isn't it? You must get wind from the outside in order to live.

When I was working in the mine I was very fast. I wasn't worried. I was not even caring, because I was accepting either dying or living. I was not even worried about why I should be in the mine. It was the only job that you could get. I was never tired. But then, when I got to Luipaard's Vlei I no longer felt like it. From there I decided to leave the mine.

How do I think about the mines today as an old man? I was supposed to become rich, but I went there and didn't get rich. There's not much money in the mines. They paid us very small money. That's why J.B. Marks was helping us. Today I know it's no use to be in the mine. You can get rich just at home, looking after your cattle, ploughing, building your house, and looking after your parents, which is very nice. When you are in Jo'burg, if you die, if you are killed by the stones underground, it's useless. You don't get anything.

After Luipaard's Vlei I went to look for a job, but when I left the mine they were refusing to give me a pass. They asked why I am leaving the mine, why I should leave and go to Johannesburg. So I didn't have any papers. When I looked for a job, and they asked me for a pass I just went away, because you needed to have one to get hired. Then I found a job in construction, at Amalgamated Packing Industry. I was not educated, I did not speak English, and so construction was okay. I was a *malaisa*, just taking stones and things and carrying them.

In those days the police were looking for Batswana without passes. The Boers hated us because Seretse Khama had married a white woman.[30] The Boers used to hit everybody from Bechuanaland who they arrested, saying, "You are one of those belonging to Seretse. *Dat kaffir from your land.*" They used to hit us, and we were in trouble because of Seretse. "You people think you can marry a white woman?" The people were very excited that a black man was married to a white woman. Nobody was against that. Everybody supported Seretse, except *Kgosi* Tshekedi [31] and Bathoeñ.

I was staying now in Newclare Township. There was one girl there, who I was making friends with. I could not get a house, so I just slept there, in a back room. Later on, I decided to get another job again. I was not lazy, but the money was very, very small. I could afford to buy a suit, or send money to my parents, but it wasn't enough. I was feeling that we were not being paid good money.

That's when I joined in unions, and politics, for the first time, because my wages were so small. Certain chaps that I was working with influenced me to fight for money. These Europeans were not paying us. Before that I was just attending meetings, and sympathising. I joined a trade union, in town. That time I couldn't even speak one word of English, but when I attended the meetings of trade union, the chaps who were

speaking English, I was just listening to them. Very carefully, I was listening to them. I liked to attend those meetings, to hear what was happening. Later on I thought, "How did I come to understand English?"

For about 3-4 months, I didn't hear what they were saying. Later on, I caught one word, then another. They were saying that we were working hard, but not getting paid. We should come together. Nkadimeng was the leader, and he organised me to be in the Trade Union Congress. They used to come into the firm and call a meeting. We used to stop at lunchtime, and go outside. He was telling us that the firm does not treat us well. Why should we suffer like this, when we were the workers?

I worked there as *malaisa*, but after some time I said, "This job is heavy for me." It was small money, very small money. So I just left and I went to look for another job.

First, I was working at a poultry business. I entered that poultry thing and asked for job. Now these boys working there didn't want me to look for job there, I don't know why. They said, "*Ga gona tiro, a ka sebenze.*" Then one gentlemen, a Jewish guy, when I passed, he called me. He said, "What do you want?"

I said, "I want a job."

He said, "Okay, sit down, take a chair there. I'm taking you, you can take post to the general post office and in the afternoon you will collect it. That is your job."

Then, this chap gave me a key and bicycle so that I could go to the post office for him. It was the first time I saw a post office so big. There were many post boxes; I didn't know which one was the right one that fit my key. One guy showed me. I opened it, took the letter, and took it to my boss. He said, "That is your job. You are making tea for me, and you're getting my letters." By that time I could hear English, but when I talked, I was struggling too much. But I was hearing, so I did my job well.

Now these other boys who were first against me began to want to use me. They were carrying lots of cattle food, big bags. The next day, when I was returning from the post, this big chap who was carrying bags around called me. He said, "Take off your hat and put a bag on your head."

"What for?"

"You cannot work alone. You are sitting on that chair all day. All the workers are complaining."

Then that chap, my boss, came to me, and said, "What is taking place?"

"These chaps, they say I must carry a bag."

"A bag! You are my worker. You are not needed here. Go sit down!" His office was on one side. I just sat there, and when he needed me he just called me. I continued to work there for a long time, and the boss never wanted to see me carrying bags.

This is where I started to catch English properly. Every afternoon I used to go and buy a newspaper from the salesmen. Then I would take it, at home I tried to read it by myself, not using anybody else. I liked the newspaper, the *Rand Daily Mail*, very much. Nobody was teaching me to read it. I just forced my eyes to find out what these names and words were, and I learned to read that way.

One day I went to the postal office in the afternoon, after I collected letters from my boss. He said, "You must deliver one here to the shop at this address." So I went to a place at the corner of Small and Commissioner streets. There was a big chap there, Mr. Ginsberg. He had one leg, and was the owner of that furniture shop. I gave him the letter.

He said, "You'll start for me on Tuesday."

I was shocked. What had happened to my boss now? I started to be worried. I took my bicycle and went back to work. My boss asked, "Have you been to Mr. Ginsberg?"

"Yes."

"What did he tell you?"

"He said I must come and start."

"Right. You are going to work there. I am selling this firm here. It is already sold."

All these other guys that were working there, they just threw them out.

When I went to work there with Ginsberg, at his furniture shop, I was working dispatch. After people bought a carpet and paid, they took the slip and brought it to me. Then I would take their parcel, and put it in their car. Then they would give me some money—a tip. Man, they gave me money, much money! At first it was a little bit tough to me, because my English was still improving. But after three months, I could hear what the man wanted. I was also supposed to be writing numbers and other things in books, but I didn't know how to write! After three months I could do these things, but before that, I think God was directing me what to do, because I did not understand my duties.

I was working for Mr. Ginsberg's assistant, a white guy called Mr. Rotten. All these carpets, they were coming from London, and I knew all their names. I would place them all in big piles, arranging them by colours. That was my duty. When the people came looking for carpets, they called me on top. At other times, because my boss didn't know the Dutch language, he used to call me when Boers came. Then I would explain all the things about these carpets to them. I would talk nicely, "This carpet, it's from abroad," and say other nice things about them.

After staying with my girlfriend for some time, I was able to get a place to live, but it was difficult. You know, when you go to get just a small room, these Indians are very

horrible. The one Indian I found in Newclare had about two or four rooms, but we had to compete to get one of them. I used to pay £2 every month, for just a small room in Newclare. If somebody else came asking for a room from that Indian, sometimes I had to offer to pay more rent so I could remain in that place! I stayed there for a very long time, until I was deported.

My father was very, very nice. I remember one day, he went to Jo'burg to search for me because I had been outside Bechuanaland for four years. Another chap, my cousin, not a close relative, but a cousin *ka Setswana*, you know, was also in Pretoria. They passed through to there, and then they found him, and told him to go home. Then my father said, "I am going to get my son, but I don't know where he is." You know God he can direct you in ways which you can never understand. That day he came for me it was a Sunday so I was just sitting on my doorstep in Newclare. I saw a man coming on the road, wearing an overcoat. His style of walk was just like my father's. Just when he passed, I said, "Daddy, I'm here."

"*Ao*, my son, I am looking for you."

"Come in daddy, let me make dinner for you."

He asked me to go home with him. He thought I had been away too long in *Gauteng*. But I was not ready to go back. So I told daddy: "Tomorrow morning I'm going to work." He stayed with me a little while, learning about my life in Newclare. When he left he knew I was in the struggle. I gave him some money to take to my mother with the message that I still had work to do in South Africa.

I liked working at the carpet store, but eventually I had a problem with the owner. It began with the son of Mr. Ginsberg, a lawyer for the horse racing company. One day I went to his office, in a tall building. I gave him two carpets. Then I went back to the shop. After a few days, they called me to take the two carpets back to the firm. He no longer wanted them. Mr. Ginsberg said, "My son, he doesn't like these carpets."

Mr. Rotten, my manager, he wanted to pinch these carpets, but I don't know how he did it. All the carpets had a margin, a number on the carpet. I put all the margin numbers on the paper, but somehow they went missing. One day they called me, and asked me where are the two carpets from Ginsberg's son. "I don't know, but I brought them back from Mr. Ginsberg."

They thought I stole them. They asked me many questions. I told them that I brought them back, and put them on the floor with the other carpets. "Look chaps, I brought back these carpets. If they left here, they left after they came back." But they didn't believe me, and they called the police.

The police came, one black and one European. I told them, "How can I get out past

the front desk with these carpets?" The next day two more police came, then the following day another two. At last, they asked me where I am staying at Newclare. They just took my number, and went to Newclare. They found no carpets that side. They said to Ginsberg, "If he gave us a false number for his house, we would arrest him. Now we cannot do anything. Now, he is free."

Then, when they saw I was innocent, I said, "Look, Mr. Ginsberg, you are making me into a thief. I am not a thief, but you claim I am." Ginsberg, he was crying so hard.

I told him, "I brought those carpets back, and Mr. Rotten took their numbers. Now they just disappeared after I brought them, but you claim I took them. What is this?"

"Okay, you can go."

Then I went back to Amalgamated again, for a second time. The first time I was just a *malaisa*, but the second time my job changed. There was one Dutch fellow, who we called Mokoti. Whether he once worked in the mine, I don't know, but his name meant 'underground.' Now, he said he would take me to run various machines, and to repair them. I was working there continuously until I was arrested. Hey, but I was still only being paid very little money.

Before I worked at Amalgamated the second time I was an ordinary man. When I returned the people asked me to become a shop steward, collecting money from the workers. So Nkadimeng took me and made me a shop steward. Now I could speak English and write properly, because of those other jobs. We took money from the people, and made a list of the names. Then I took them to the office. We continuously fought for our rights. I knew I could not talk much, but I could feel the pains. I used to talk to these guys. We went on, went on, and had many members who all left their union fees with me. That's why, when the police later arrested me before the Treason Trial, they took so much money from me."

Keitseng's reliability and incorruptibility, first recognised by his white employers, now came to be utilised first by the union movement, and then by its ally, the African National Congress. Ironically, it was the skills his white employers taught him that he later directed back their way. It was during his second stint at Amalgamated, in the early 1950s, as the ANC began to adopt the tactics of passive resistance, that Keitseng emerged from obscurity.

CHAPTER THREE

The ANC Activist, 1952-1956

It was Keitseng's union activities that brought him into contact with the ANC in the late 1940s. Following the emergence of the ANC Youth League, with its 1948 Manifesto and Programme of Action, the movement sought to mobilise on a mass level by creating a new post-war coalition with various worker organisations. It was at this time that Keitseng joined the ANC.

He was by no means the first Motswana to do so. A number of Chiefs had supported the formation of this organisation in 1912, at which time a number of Batswana were elected to offices in the movement. Richard Sidzumo, the Bakwena Tribal Secretary, for instance, was the Secretary General of the ANC's Griqualand West and Bechuanaland section. He signed up many Batswana as members. And although Batswana became less involved with the ANC after the mid-1920s, they retained their identification with the party. Chiefs, for instance, used "Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika" as their anthem.

When the ANC underwent resurgence after 1948, many Batswana migrants working in South Africa joined it. Unlike the earlier period when the Tswana elite supported the ANC, this time it was poorer men who became active. They joined as individuals rather than as part of a broader effort. It was only later, following their return to Bechuanaland, that they ever formed a cohesive group. Keitseng, then, independently of other Batswana, was one of a number of migrants who were radicalised in the early 1950s.

Keitseng gained notoriety as an ANC activist at the beginning of the Defiance Campaign in June 1952, when he was the organiser and volunteer-in-chief for the ANC branch in Newclare township. The branch was led by Keitseng's old mentor J.B. Marks, who was then also provincial president of the Transvaal ANC and a leading mover of the Campaign. Given Marks' many other commitments, co-ordinating ANC activities in Newclare increasingly fell on the shoulders of Comrade Fish—who came to be known as the "the Robin Hood of Newclare."[32]

During the Defiance Campaign volunteers were pledged to carry out various forms of passive resistance such as openly violating pass laws or entering areas reserved for other races. By January 1953, when the campaign was called off, over eight thousand volunteers had been so arrested. Among the first were forty-one men from Newclare led by Keitseng.

"I was in the Trade Unions Congress, after leaving the AMU. They were not very different, and each was demanding all our rights. Then in 1948 I joined the ANC. One day we would go to union meetings, and the next day to the meeting of the ANC. I continued to be in both until 1956, when I was arrested. My daddy was not happy at first when he found out that I was attending such meetings. One day while he was staying at my house he met some of my comrades who had come looking for me to

attend the Defiance Campaign meeting. He said I would put myself into trouble. He still wanted me to return with him to Bechuanaland, but I told him not to worry.

At the beginning, I was doing more things with the workers, but then, when the ANC became very active during the Defiance Campaign, I started to be highly involved with them as a chief volunteer. But I never stopped being with the workers. Even later when I went to Bechuanaland I was organising them. But being in the ANC became the most important thing to me. Since the 1950s I have been in many parties and organisations, but the ANC is always the most important to me. I will die as a member of my party and as a child of God. You know, the ANC is the true party for all people in Africa.

People started looking upon me as a leader during the Defiance Campaign, though I did not see myself as a leader. I went to the meeting for the Defiance Campaign, where J.B. Marks and others were saying, "Look chaps the time has come for us to volunteer to go to jail." Some of the chaps were making excuses, but I volunteered. Then I was put in charge of organising other volunteers in Newclare to be arrested. On the morning of our protest I did not say anything to my employer. Forty-one guys showed up, but some others were just cowards never came. I was not afraid, I said, "Chaps, today we make our stand."

We went to Park Station where we violated the law by sitting in the "Whites-Only" places. The funny thing was while some people were afraid of being arrested, the Boers were afraid to arrest us! When we came to be arrested they would try to confuse us with questions. If a somebody did not know what to say they would send him off. So when they asked us what we were doing we all answered, "I am fighting for my country."

The police would ask for our names and we would say, "My name is Africa."

"Where are you from?"

"Africa."

"Where do you stay?"

"Africa."

"Where do you work?"

"Africa," that's all we told them. They cursed us but we were so stubborn. We sang "Malan open the jail doors, we are coming." The Boers did not know what to do with us. They just cursed and hit us. They didn't understand our songs. So they hit us and put us in the Flying Squads [police vans].

When we got to the police headquarters it was the same: "What is your name?"—"Africa!" "Where do you work?"—"Africa!" "Where are you from?"—"Africa!" "Where do you stay?"—"Africa?" "Why are you a cheeky Kaffir?"—"I am Africa, fighting for my freedom."

Before the magistrate we did the same thing. We made a lot of noise, singing songs. Malan had said that he would jail us for ten years. When he said this he was not thinking about the law just giving an opinion. Our lawyer, Joe Slovo, told the magistrate that there was no law in his books to keep us in jail that long. Hey! The magistrate must have looked all night but he could not find anything in his books. The next day all 41 of us got four weeks in jail for disturbing the peace. We started singing again, "Hey, Malan open the jail doors, we want to enter." The magistrate told Slovo to tell us to keep quiet or we would get another two weeks. We said, "Yes, four weeks is not enough for Africa!" We were so stubborn. The magistrate spoke to Slovo some more and then turned to us and said, "You have done it."

I think we were only about two weeks in jail. When we got out the ANC greeted us and gave us food. In Newclare we were heroes. We had done it! What surprised me though was my employer, Ginsberg. When I got out he said to me, "So Fish, you have got yourself messed up with politics, you're now one of these freedom fighters." I said yes, and he just shrugged his shoulders and said nothing more. I wasn't fired.

After the Defiance Campaign, things got hot again, because the government was promoting this question of women carrying a pass.[33] Everyone was now supposed to carry a pass, woman or man. Women were rising up, saying they were not going to carry the pass. Dutch fellows, they forced everyone to carry them. One day we had a meeting in Newclare, and a woman called Mrs. Mueller, a hot lawyer, said she would defend any woman in Newclare who got arrested for not having a pass. If anything happened, she was going to defend them. I don't know who was paying her, but she was going to defend them.

We decided to make protest, not far from where I was staying. We were going to try and get the children to not attend school, because they were suffering. But also we were protesting against women's passes. Our group went to one school, a Bantu Education school, in order to close it.

Women were not going to go to work at that time because of the protests against the pass laws. I had to work on the first day of our protest, but I told my girlfriend that she must join in. I told her, "When you get up, you must join some women and go close the schools." She did it. Seven women and one man called Chamile went. A teacher came to open the school and a bell rang to start it. But the children there refused to go in. Those comrades and students were shouting, "No school on Monday," which became our saying.

The next day was a holiday for me, so I joined the protest. The police were watching us, but we went all over, saying, "Tomorrow no school." The police tried to stop us from

putting posters on the walls, and would take them off. We were in two groups. My group, the police were following us, and they would take our papers off the walls. Another team, following, would then put them up again.

On the next day, I went to work, and I told another Xhosa woman at Amalgamated that she should not be there. Why should she be working if other women were being arrested? She should go and be arrested as well. She was ashamed and said, "I don't know what's taking place now."

But my girlfriend and the other activists went back to protest. The principal of that school rang the bell for children to come to school. But the kids did not want to go in, because they were against the pass laws. Later on, this teacher phoned the police, who came there. Parents were refusing for their children to enter. The policemen were insulting people there, calling them "*Blacksoms*". Dutch people are always insulting people quickly. Then the kids said one policeman was "bloody stupid". So the police started hitting them. Ladies at the gate, putting posters all over on the walls, kept staying there. Eventually, the police took six women and the one man to the station (I don't know where the seventh woman was by now). When I was working, at Amalgamated, my heart was itching because I wanted to know what was happening there.

Somebody told me that they were all arrested. In the afternoon, we called a meeting, and called Mrs. Mueller to come and defend them. I think the seven slept in jail for two days. They got out on bail, but the Boers didn't want to see them coming again. After a while they were discharged, because there was no reason for them to be arrested.

I was remaining in Newclare. One day I was at my house listening on the radio, as I didn't go to work that day. In the afternoon the women came home, and after that, there was a meeting at Trade Hall. The old man, Father Huddleston,[34] was the chairman of the meeting, and Joe Slovo was there. We were trying to organise a conference at Kliptown for people from all over the country. We were taking a decision about when to have this meeting. When we were there in Trade Hall we saw the police come in. They weren't wearing uniforms—Special Branch—there were about eight. They sat down all around, in different places.

Slovo decided to call a Chief Justice, a Scotchman, because the police were interfering with us. He said, "We are having a private meeting here. All the police must get out." The Chief Justice ordered them out, and people were calling them 'bloody dogs' and pinching them as they left. The ANC sued, claiming a lot of money from the government for interference. The government paid that money.

At another meeting soon after, the policemen came again. Their commandant was

wearing a grey suit. He was a little bit scared. He was speaking Setswana, saying "*Dumelang borra*. I have not come to interfere." Some others came, but people were kicking them, and they left. We held the big meeting in Kliptown, and Father Huddleston was the chair. People from all over attended this powerful meeting. I had even sent a letter to Chief Bathoeñ to attend, but he was a coward—he didn't come. Other chiefs came from all over South Africa. Bathoeñ, his wife was the sister of Moroka, one of the ANC presidents. She sided with us, but Bathoeñ, he was scared and stayed away. [35]

In the afternoon, after we had finished our main business by passing the Freedom Charter, we saw the police bringing big trucks and many horses. After that, they surrounded us with these horses, and were going to hit us. Father Huddleston got on the platform. He said, "This is a provocation. We have been here talking for hours peacefully. We don't want to see the police here. What do they want?" They closed us off, closing the meeting. All our stuff, like ANC membership cards, they took from us. Mine, they didn't take it, nor my green tie. I used to like that green tie very much. It has a wheel of freedom on it which was the wheel of the Congress Alliance. Our alliance had the ANC, the Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, the Congress of Democrats for Whites, and the unions. Each of these movements was a spoke in the wheel. So my tie showed all races moving forward together for freedom.

I kept my things but everybody had their stuff taken. We were dispersed and went home. We sued the government for interference, again. Continuously, when we went to court, the police were very harsh to everybody. You couldn't even sleep in the house at night, because the police kept coming to our places, knocking on the door, and asking lots of nonsense. "*Waar is you pass, jong? Waar is you special pass*?" A lot of things. If you didn't have it they arrested you. Maybe you had to pay a £5 fine.

After this, the question was are we going to allow the women to be given passes? Both the Trade Unions and the ANC were working together and said no. The union was the son of the ANC. There were some large meetings at that time, and at one of them, a woman, Lillian Ngoyi, was there.[36] She was the leader. She wanted the women to go and protest in Pretoria. While they were organising this protest men and women split their activities. During the day the men would go out, organising, and the women would sleep. Then, the women would go at night, all night. We were exchanging actions, until they went to Pretoria.

There were many people at Pretoria, against President Strydom. The police were all over, trying to stop these people—men and women from all over the country. This woman, Ngoyi, was leading them, saying they were suing the government for the pass law. "We are carrying the baby on our back. Why should we carry pass? We are not

slaves who are carrying passes, like the men. Strydom, you have touched the woman, you have struck a rock!"

We had much protest during those years. Newclare was always hot.[37] Other locations were sometimes quiet but the people of Newclare were always standing up. We had a big meeting of the Trade Unions Congress in Newclare[38] where we decided to strike during the time of the White election. It was a very big meeting; hundreds and hundreds of people were coming from all over the country. Our President Luthuli and the other leaders all came. All the houses were full of people. We demanded "A pound a day," and "Nats must go". At Newclare the people stayed away from work, but in many of the other townships people were just keeping quiet. The Boers always knew us in Newclare to be troublesome somebodies.

Later on we started protesting again. When any of the boys were arrested, for any false charge, they went and served on the farms. These farmers were coming to collect the people, taking them to go work in the eastern Transvaal. The ANC decided to send some people to those farms to investigate because the people were dying like anything. The farmers were killing prisoners just for looking back at them, and then they buried them in the same place. This happened continuously until the ANC decided to investigate. Some ANC people took a car from Johannesburg, and then exchanged it for another car near the prison. They didn't want to go to the prison with Johannesburg numberplates, or those people would notice them. When they get there, they just acted like stupid people, rather than showing they were lawyers. They wore tattered things, and they were not very clean. Then when they go there the police asked them, "Hey, *kaffirs*, what you want?"

"Hey, *broer*, I want see my brother who's been arrested."

"*Wat's you naam, jong*?"

Those ANC guys gave them any name they could think of, and the police allowed them to just go around, and look for their brothers. These investigators talked to all the prisoners and asked why people were being killed. They found that people could not even complain to the Boers. The situation was very bad. When the prisoners were killed, they were just buried there on that prison farm.

That farm was growing potatoes. Those guys came back and reported to the ANC about what was happening. The lawyers sat down, and said they would go there. They acted stupid, like they wanted to buy some workers, some slaves. These Dutch didn't know that these chaps were lawyers. They took information, and arranged for some slaves to work for them.

After that the ANC called for a strike against potatoes.[39] We made a lot of placards,

at the big market in Johannesburg, shouting about what is taking place at this farm. You know, God can give you a correct picture. You know, this potato was now a person. After we protested, we said nobody will eat potatoes, throughout Johannesburg and South Africa. If we saw people eating them, we said, "You are eating your brother." Then they said they would not eat them any more.

Women were going house to house. They were getting people to put them in the fire. It was a big strike by the women. A big group went to the market, and they took all the potatoes and they smashed them on the road, continuously. The whole township was smelling of rotten potatoes. Then the boycott was off, after taking about 3-4 months. God can make things to be seen by people who don't see. The people said, "No, we don't eat potatoes." Potatoes were getting rotten, all over Johannesburg. Nobody was buying them.

Then, Tambo and the lawyers said that we can eat potatoes now. But I never ate them myself, and I even came to Bechuanaland later on not wanting to see potatoes in my eyes.

There used to be a song called: "*mazambane*" which said, "We don't eat potatoes." When I came here, when they deported me, I came with this song.

Police were continually giving us problems through the 1950s. I remember one day I was selling *New Age* in Maraisburg, and I met this guy from Special Branch. He said, "Fish, you are coming to sell your shit here. This paper you are selling is shit."

"If you want to buy it, you can buy it."

"You *praat kak*, man."

"Why you worry about the paper, because I am selling it?" I answered. We just shouted at each other in the street, at Hamburg Station. I was just alone there, and they could have killed or locked me up easily.

Another time I saw the same chap when I was in the Trade Union office, and he came down the stairs when I was walking up. He was looking at me. But he never did anything after that."

In 1956 Keitseng became a local folk hero after an incident with the police in Newclare, which both led to his eventual arrest and prosecution as well as to his fame as "The Robin Hood of Newclare." Due to his rising fame, the government decided to include him among the 156 ANC leaders prosecuted in the Treason Trial, even though he had never served in any national executive position.

"In the 1950s I was just involved in politics. I didn't care about drinking or going to any club or shebeens or anything. You know, there were some ladies who I was chasing, but that is different. I was concentrating full-time on politics after I joined the ANC in 1948.

Eventually I was arrested again by the police for my activities. I was not arrested by the police for being a leader. I was arrested because I was hit by the police and I was refusing to go to jail and the people came to assist me.

One day I was in Newclare, and I saw a group of policemen, all of them black, arresting some people there. One woman who was carrying a baby was arrested, for cooking beer. Then I told the police, right there in the middle of the street, "No, you chaps, you are interfering much here. Release these people. You guys are all blacks. Why should you arrest these people here? They are your brothers." When I said this some other bystanders also became involved, and they were shouting, "We're going to hit you people." They picked up stones, and the police started running away. About seven policemen, they just ran away from us.

That is why, after that, those policemen called more police to come and help them. I knew they would come and find me, so I went to my house quickly, and I took the money of my trade union, because at that time I was a shop steward. I put the money in my pockets, I got a very nice white shirt and jacket, and started walking to Newclare station so I could leave on the train.

The police were looking for me, and went to my house—I was not there. But as I was walking to the station a car pulled up behind me with police inside. They were saying, "This one. It's this one." Then they came into me. They hit me, they hit me. They took my jacket, they cut all my clothes up, and they took my money. I was wearing a very nice shirt. They tried to put me in the van. Then some ANC boys came and helped me, and they released me from these people. They hit the van with the stones, hit it until they pulled me out, and then we ran away.

My shirt and jacket were gone. I found blood all over. I can show you marks on my head and body even today. I saw about four police on the street as we ran, but they didn't interfere. There was a sergeant with a gun, but he didn't interfere. I didn't care. I picked up stones and threw them, and I hit the policeman with the gun. I didn't think that this man could shoot me, I don't know why. I asked myself why later on. I hit him hard and he ran away with his gun. He didn't even use it!

We knew the police would come for me again. That's why the guys took me to a doctor. All my body was very sore, because they hit me hard with sticks.

They put me down there with a Jewish guy, Doctor Goldberg, who had a house in Newclare. An ordinary doctor in Newclare, he was very close to me. He was just like an ANC member, that doctor, because he used to help me no matter what happened.

What surprised me was at eight o' clock that night. As I was hiding in Goldberg's house I heard the people warning everybody about the police. They used to hit the

poles, telephone poles made out of iron. They were shouting, "*Kubofu*!" "It is red!" They were referring to the white people. The police were coming and challenging us. Everybody was hitting the poles, "cling, cling." People all over. Then the boys, the ANC people would come out. If there were a passage, crossing the street, some people would stay one side, and another group on the other side. Then when the Flying Squad came driving by, you would hear the stones, hitting the sides of the vans. Also, ANC guys liked to go to sharp corners, putting big stones on the road so that when a police car came around the corner at high speed, it could not avoid hitting them. Those vans would get scraped man. I was watching all this through the window. When the police came that time they fought all night.

The police were fighting, trying to get me. All the people in the township, they were rising up, fighting with the police. In the morning they went back again to their police stations. At night, Sunday night, they challenged again. They were trying hard to get me! But I was still in the Doctor's house, and they couldn't get me. And then in the morning, Sunday, all the police in Johannesburg and the Reef, they came in. Police, horses, and these big trucks filled with the policemen.

I was in the house, just taking a look through the curtain to see what was happening. And there was a real fight that night, until they put about one thousand people under arrest. Some of them were just women carrying their children. They locked them in the Newlands police station, asking them continuously, "Where is Keitseng?"

"We don't know him." They didn't know him. About one thousand people in Newclare, they didn't know Keitseng.

Those policemen were complaining, "But you're staying together." So they just kept those people locked up there. They kept them about three days in the police station. Then the policemen tried to fine them, saying, "Okay, five pounds, five pounds, five pounds, five pounds, five pounds, five pounds." They refused, the people, and remained in prison instead. Then the next day the police tried to fine them again, "four pounds each." Again the people refused.

Each day the fine was reduced, "three pounds, two pounds, one pound, ten shillings, five shillings." Every day the people refused. Eventually they let them go without even paying one shilling.

While these people were in jail the guys put me somewhere in the Western Native Township location. When I was there I saw the people who were released coming, singing,

"*Senzenena, senzenena.*"

You know what that means, that song? "What had we done? What had we done?" The black people, they were singing. Then somebody came into the house, then he says, "Look man, they are looking for you. Better we must take you to Mandela in Johannesburg."

CHAPTER FOUR

Treason Trial

Keitseng, who would hand himself into the authorities following his escape in Newclare, was subsequently prosecuted in the infamous Treason Trial, when the Nationalist government of South Africa attempted to disrupt the ANC by imprisoning its entire leadership and placing it on trial for treason. This marathon trial lasted from 1956 until 1961, when the government eventually dropped the case and the defendants went free.

Keitseng, unlike all but one of the other 155 defendants, had to spend much of the trial in prison, serving out another sentence he received for resisting arrest. He clearly enjoyed the trial, and like practically all observers viewed the exercise as a complete farce. Although the government was intent on harassing him, Keitseng was quite comfortable during the trial, when he indulged in outpouring of financial and moral support that sympathisers gave to the trialists. In prison, for instance, he was looked after by some brutal gangsters that the government placed him with, while in the court-room he was able to associate with the cream of a dynamic organisation, and to enjoy the spectacle unfolding around him.

As is well known, the South African government was unable to garner a single conviction in the trial. Its case was utterly implausible. By 1959 the authorities began to withdraw charges against various defendants, and trialists from outside South Africa were deported. This is what ultimately happened to Keitseng.

"All these events were taking place in December 1956, and this was when I was arrested for the Treason Trial. The comrades in Western Native Location put me in the taxi, and I went straight to Johannesburg, to Mandela's office. When I got there, I told him everything was gone, my pass was gone. I didn't know how I could work, because you needed a pass to do so. He said, "Look, I'm a lawyer. They want you. They've got your passport, and they've got everything of yours.[40] Better you go to the police station. But they won't hit you." Mandela made a note to the police station. It said that I lost my pass because the police took it.

When I entered the police station, at Newlands, they said, "Ja, it's him man, *skellem*. That's a *skellem*. "*Klerge van you*. We've really got you now!"

Then they said, "What you want? You've been releasing the prisoners from the police. Why?"

"I don't know why. The police were interfering with the people, I don't know why."

"You don't know that you should carry a pass."

I said I know, but these chaps had taken mine without my permission.

After that they just booked me, and told me, "Your other chaps are all in the police station. All seven." That was the same group that was arrested when I helped to release

them. The police just picked them up in the street. They locked me in there, and I slept. Early in the morning I woke and heard the names of Mandela and everybody being called in the police station. What had happened now, I was asking myself? Then I remembered that we had had a meeting [the day before] and were told that all the leaders would be arrested. But I was not a leader. I said, they are referring only to the leaders, because I was just a young boy and an ordinary volunteer. Later on, I heard the door opening. Somebody came in, and he said, "Fish!"

I said, "I'm here."

"You know that you are arrested, for resisting arrest."

"Yes."

"No. Next charge." He meant that I was being arrested now for something else. "You are included with Mandela and other leaders." He gave two warrants of arrest, and then I found that I was charged with treason.

At the same time I was listening and hearing the names of others like Mandela being called. I was surprised. I was arrested again, in the police station. What happened now? I left my cell and stayed outside.

I said to myself, "What's taking place now?"

Before I could find out, he called those seven people I helped in Newclare and took us to the court in Newlands. The judge told us, "Okay, you people are in court, you seven must pay fifty pounds, fifty pounds, fifty pounds, fifty pounds, for bail. You Keitseng, are not paying anything. We'll take you to Mandela and the others."

They took me to the truck, taking me to Johannesburg—Marshall Square. That is a big jail that one. They took all our names, everything. Later on they took us to court, New Court. They said, "Gentlemen, you are remanded to No. 4, Police Station No. 4." They put us in the trucks and we went down to No. 4. When we got there, we found that a big crowd was outside the jail, and these people were ready to help us. Robert Resha[41] started singing a song, "We're not going to allow these people to do as they like with us." We all joined making a big noise. A lot of us had all been arrested. If you look at the Treason Trial pictures you'll see us there, mixed—European, Indian, African, anybody who was included in the ANC. There was lots of food for us there, brought by these supporters.

When we came there Mr. Scholz, the Supt. of No. 4, he says, "You people. What do you want here with lots of cars? Are you bringing food for these people? You're not allowed to give food here. Go away. Go away."

Then Mandela and others, before he went into the prison, said, "Okay, we're making application to the High Court." Later, at about eleven o' clock at night, we're standing

there in prison talking and Mandela and other lawyers came. The judge had said that we could not be refused food. All sorts of assorted food came in there.

I think we spent about three days in No. 4. I had no idea what I was arrested for, because I had been fighting against the police. In this case, I was surprised why I was included. Because I was not a leader, and we heard that it was the leaders who were being arrested. Now when I asked Mandela why I was being arrested, he said, "You think these people are watching you. They aren't. They are watching your actions."

Then, one day, they called us into court. It was a drill hall, where the police used to drill. A big one! between Parker Station and Doornfontein. Then we got in court. They told us we're all going back to jail again. We didn't know that the people were collecting money, so that we could go free on bail. I don't know where this money came from.

When we went to court, we found the people coming in cars from all over. After we went inside fighting started there, outside. Some people had stones, they were knocking the shops, some people were being hit by police there with sticks. We heard the guns going, "Thung, thung," outside.

Bishop Reeves went out and said, "Stop Shooting. Please stop shooting." Then things became quieter, but the crowd of people was still large. [42]

After the day inside the court was finished the police came and took me, alone, back to No.4. The next day I was taken back to Drill Hall, and we were there for a couple of days, but I kept being taken back to No. 4. Then one day they called us into New Court. Everybody was being released on bail. But, just, when they came to me, they said, "These other chaps are released on bail for the Treason Trial. But because of your arrest for resisting the police, you are going back to No. 4." I went back there with one lady, a Coloured lady, from Cape Town. Her name was Jansen, but I can't remember why she was also in jail at that time.

I had been sentenced for one year for my case of releasing the prisoners from the police. Mandela was defending me. After they found me guilty, Mandela paid my bail and said we must appeal this case to the High Court. I was staying in Newclare for three months, awaiting trial. We were trying to get Abram Fischer [43] to defend me, because Mandela was just a young lawyer, and he needed an advocate like Fischer. The case was being continuously postponed. We spent about three months waiting. Then on the day of the trial Fischer sent a note saying that his father had died. He was still in the Free State on his father's farm, so there was nobody to defend me. Mandela was not defeated, saying to me, "Look man, can you appeal again? Can I appeal this case?"

I said, "No. You are just wasting my time. Let me go to jail." I fought with Mandela, who was saying, "Let me battle this case." I said, "Let me go to jail. This is wasting my

time. What's the use going to bed every night, just being worried." So I went to jail for eight months, four months suspended.

After I was sentenced they took me to No. 4, to make me a full-time prisoner. When I got there, I was supposed to get my hair cut with other new inmates. You know how they cut their hair? With the Africans, they cut half of the head only, calling it "one sided." A little boy policeman was there watching us getting our heads shaven, but when it came to my turn he called his superiors, saying in Dutch "Wasn't this one in the Treason Trial?" Then his boss says, "This one, he cannot be cut." He put me aside, and they put me in a part of the jail called No. 8.

When I got to No. 8, all the police were so excited, and all of them wanted to hit me. But they didn't. Instead they put me in a cell with very serious criminals, so that they would hit me. When they were taking me through the cells to my own place, I was scared. I was afraid of these criminals and *tsotsis*.

But when I got inside my cell, these criminals were very nice to me. They said, "You Fish, we know you are a Freedom Fighter. Nobody can touch you, you are our father. We know you are our father. When we read the newspapers we heard about you. Nobody will touch you." Every day, when they picked up food, these serious criminals would go pick up food for me. Very serious criminals.

Quite soon after that, I was surprised when Mandela, when he was in his home in Orlando, phoned to No. 8. Mr. Hoffman, the superintendent, came and told me, "Mandela, he wants to see you. He's outside."

Mandela came in. He gave me food, he gave me lots of things. He said to the others in the cell, "You chaps. This chap is a Freedom Fighter. He's small, but he's a freedom fighter." I don't know why Mandela was not scared of being in there. After that I became extremely popular.

In prison there was a guy called Mhlongo, who had done about forty years in jail. He was with the Russians gang.[44] He was a big huge boy. When he was walking around in the chains he was really shaking. The Boers thought Mhlongo and these other chaps were going to kick me.

When I get there, this chap says, "*Is yei Fish*?"

"Yes."

"*Yerr. Das is groet man.* You are fighting for us. Nobody will touch you. If you want food, we will bring it for you." They made a seat, which they made by folding the blankets. After they folded those blankets they never came undone. Even if these criminals clobbered someone with those blankets they would remain folded.

The Boers were watching, and every morning they were seeing that there was not

even a single mark on my body. All the police in jail, Zulu or whatever, they started to know that I was really a man. Black cops used to fight, even with the Boers, to see who would take me to court. They were fighting for me, because when we went to the Treason Trial students used to cook for us and I would share my food with the policemen.

Everybody who came to No. 8 from other jails, from Durban, or wherever, they all said, "Where is Fish?" They had heard about me. Even if we went and sat in the yard, they came and asked, "Where is Fish?" I didn't think, I didn't expect that I could be considered somebody important, as I was still young at that time. I was surprised why people wanted to know about me. You know why? They were reading the papers.

Those criminals I was in jail with were very dangerous. One of these guys I was in prison with was in the Spoilers gang, which was a part of the Msomi gang. His name was Boston Tar Baby. I think he was from Rhodesia, but he lived in Alexandra. But these gangsters liked thinking they were from America, so they called themselves funny names. Boston Tar Baby—that chap was shaking! When you looked at him you could see that he was a real chief. His eyes could focus on you man. For guys like that, jail is their home. They don't worry. If they want to sleep with you, they can, and the boy they want cannot complain about it.

These criminals of Alexandra were very serious. There was one white policeman working with these gangs, hiring them for jobs. His name was "Machine Gun." After these gangs collected their money, they first went to him. Good God, a senior policeman, he was the head of Msomi gang.

These criminals respected a freedom fighter like me, but they were not involved in politics. It was only Matante among the criminals who liked politics, and later he came among us in Botswana to continue his robbery.

It was at the time when I was in jail that I became a father for the first time. I never married in South Africa, because I was just a boy running after the girls. But there was one lady I was falling in love with—not a proper love, though. She was a Mosotho girl, called Maria. I talked to her first when I was awaiting trial after I was bailed out by Mandela.

I touched that woman once, but I didn't think I sent the bullets into her. But when I was in jail, somebody came from outside and told me I had a child.

"A child outside?"

"There is. You know this Mosotho lady, Maria?" He said it was his sister.

The day I was released I went to her house, and her brother saw me and came in. I stood there, and he said, "Come and see your mess-up here."

When we went there, he showed me a boy. He just looked like me. I was very pleased, because I had stayed two years with another lady and there was no child. I gave the lady a photo, a kind of book about the Treason Trial. I said if I died they must show the child who his father is, because I had to go to jail again.

In 1987 we had a meeting at Gaborone North, we were preparing for a BNF conference at Moshupa. This boy, who was playing tennis in Gaborone, came to see me for the first time. He is a big man now. I committed a big offence because I had a baby but I didn't look after him. God doesn't want a man running up and down, you know. I was still young and didn't know anything. His name is Busang, named after me, because Maria said that even though I was in jail I was going to rule. Busang's mother is now married so things ended up being just fine.

I went to court almost every day for the whole eight months that I served, but after that I got out on bail for the Treason Trial, which lasted for more than a year afterwards. I was going to court every day, but I was staying in my house in Newclare. I was surprised because the whole world was staying with us. Food, clothes, everything, every Friday we went to town to pick up food—all kinds of stuff, and we picked up anything we liked. I don't know who was paying for this food, but I was living well.

We had nine lawyers, and the Boers had nine as well. Their case was becoming very weak. In Drill Hall there was an ANC advocate, Issy Maisels, and he was burning fire. When he stood up you looked up at him, because that chap was very tall. You know that when that chap talked we used to laugh in court. Man, we used to laugh in court when Maisels and other lawyers played football with the Dutch fellows there. We fought this case until everybody didn't know whether we were prisoners or free men.

I remember another ANC lawyer, called Vernon Berrangé. One time he was examining a Coloured policeman, called [Jerimiah] Mollson, who was giving evidence against us. Berrangé stood up and looked at this guy, and said, "I hear you are Mr. Mollson. You are not Mollson, your name is Moloisane. That's Tswana." You know what this policeman had done? He had changed his name from Moloisane into Mollson so that he would no longer be seen as a Black man. Berrangé gave him hell. "I know you, you can't tell me these things. You are Moloisane. Your father was an African and your mother was a Coloured. Now you are telling us that you are Mollson. You are not Mollson, you're Moloisane."

We used to laugh in court. Berrangé! Burning fireman. That chap. If God can bring those guys back on earth, I should say please let them come again. Those chaps were defending us in this case.

I remember when another crook named Solomon Ngubuse, who claimed to be a

lawyer from Kimberly, came to testify. Actually he was known to move from place to place stealing people's money. The Boers had promised to release him from prison if he testified against us. When he was asked to identify ANC members in court, he was struggling. He always was getting the wrong person. Berrange just chased him from the dock, saying he was a thief and a criminal! Berrangé! Later he, Ngubuse, was given six months in jail for lying in court.

As the trial went on the Boers were getting worried, because the case was very weak, very weak. One day we were told that they had gone abroad to find someone that can give evidence for them. When that witness from abroad was around, the trial moved from Johannesburg to Pretoria, in a synagogue at Senekal. The first day we went to Pretoria in two buses. The Dutch wanted to put the Europeans in one bus and the Africans in the other. But no, we refused. We went half-half in each one. When we got there we were very surprised. The witness against us was a guy from Poland, called Father Bobojaski. That chap, Oswald Pirow, [45] the Attorney-General, had been going around the world for 10 months to find someone who can give evidence for him, and he came with this chap. Pirow wanted somebody from outside who can prove that communism is bad. So we spent 6 days there listening to him, he didn't say anything. He just had a collar, and acted like a Priest. When we came again for the seventh day, we heard that this preacher was gone. He just disappeared, without really giving evidence. He left the country without informing the government."

As the Government's case weakened, the police began to increase their daily harassment of the trialists, and Keitseng faced increased surveillance, and, later on, deportation.

"While I staying in Newclare location, the Dutch fellows got so worried about me. Now, the case was still on. But, they knew that the case was weak, and they decided they must kick us out. One day when I was there I saw the head of the police, the Superintendent. I was asking myself, what does this man want at my house? I went to him, and greeted him.

He says, "Fish. I'm coming to see you. We know that you've got no passport, no permit, and you're not working."

I said, "Yes, I'm not working. I've got a special document here."

"No, we don't care about that."

"Please," I asked him, "go to the immigration, speak to them. They must extend my document." I didn't know that they had been plotting with those guys already, and they had been talking with the ANC lawyers who were defending me.

Early the next morning at my house I saw one chap, an ANC lawyer, and he told me

we were going to court because the government wanted to deport me. When we got there, he said, "This chap is from Bechuanaland. As this country is still under the British government, we don't know why you want to deport him as we are under the British government as well."

The judge didn't care, and found me guilty. He said, "We don't care if Bechuanaland is British. We're going to do something about Keitseng. We give you eleven days to leave the country." He had some documents with him there, and he said, "Every paper there gives you eleven days."

You know what, this judge was lying! All these papers only gave me one day to leave! But I didn't care. So I went back to Newclare and just decided to stay. Some days later, when I was asleep I heard somebody knocking. There were spotlights all over the sides of my house. Somebody then came in. He say, "*Jong*, are you still here? Didn't we tell you that you must go?"

I said, "Where to?"

He says, "*Jong*, you blacks is shit man."

I was just lying in bed there, and he was pointing at me with a gun. I was in blankets. I stood up, he says, "Let's go to the police station." They took me there, in the middle of the night. Then I found the same chap who booked me in 1956. He said, "Fish, you mustn't sleep here. Better you must pay five pounds fine and we'll meet in court."

I said no, I'll sleep in jail. The next morning we went to court. They said, "*Jong*, we don't want to see you in this country."

"Why?"

"You must leave that place. That house you live in belongs to an Indian. We don't back him. You must get out of here quick. We don't want to see you here in this country."

So I went back to Newclare, and stayed for about three days, helplessly sitting down there in my yard. Purposefully I was refusing to go. Early one morning I saw two policemen. One of them was a Coloured, but the other one was darker—it was that guy Moloisane, calling himself Mollson! They said, "Fish, we don't want to see you in this house tonight. You must go." It was about eight o' clock in the morning.

I said, "Where should I go?"

"We don't want to see you here in Newclare, where you stay. We don't want to see you in Alexandra, we don't want to see you in Orlando, we don't want to see you in any location. When we say you must go, you must go."

They picked up all my things in the house and they just dumped them outside. Then they asked me, "Where are you going?"

I said, "I don't know. There are only two alternatives. If I'm not going underground, in the soil, I'm going to heaven."

They said, "*Hey, jong, nie speel nie.* We're not playing."

When they left, everybody came and took up my things, and they put it all in somebody's home. I said, "I'm going home." The case was still on, but the police did not care that I was still on trial. What type of justice was that?

That afternoon I took my jacket and went to Bechuanaland, and found my sister in Lobatse. This was at Christmas of 1959. When I sat down, I said, "My sister."

She said, "We have no houses here for you to stay in. My husband is working for the railway but we can't really help you much." I spent three days with her figuring out where I could stay and put my clothes and things.

I thought maybe they would arrest me when I went back to Johannesburg. I had lots of stuff at that time, with a very big wardrobe. I had everything at that time. We were getting everything during the Trial, because the whole country was supporting us. Every Friday, we were going to the shop of one Chinese man, where we picked up food and all kinds of things. imagine, we took soap for laundry every Friday! So when I went to Johannesburg, I was wondering how I could get my things, because they had kicked me out already. Where would I stay? Well, it was somebody I had fallen in love with, just a friend. When I went down to Newclare to check my house, I asked somebody nearby, "Why is that car staying there, near my house?"

"Since you left, they are staying there, every day changing their car. These chaps are there night and day looking for you."

I was already arranging for a truck to take me out. Luckily, the police didn't know where my things were. Then I went to Sophiatown, by double decker, to get some help from the ANC. I found Walter Sisulu. I told him that I didn't know how to leave. He pulled out fifty pounds, he said, "Look man, that can take you out to your country, in fact, not your country, our country."

He says, "Go in front. You must go to help us there, better than when you are here."

After that I went to get to the chap who had the truck, he refused to help me. "No, the police took my plate number. I don't know what they want to do. I can't help you now." So I told him that he should put his truck far from my house and wait for me where he could be safe.

There was one chap I knew from Kanye, working in Johannesburg, and I took his mule cart to get my stuff. We loaded that stuff and took it some distance to where the truck was waiting.

Then we loaded up and went to Zeerust, where that chap had a wife. I was scared

that they would get me on the way. But my friend was not involved in politics, which was why they were not looking for him. When we arrived we sat there with his wife's family. I'm telling you something, God was with us. In Zeerust there was no place to leave my things, and I had a lot of them. Soap! We were taking it every Friday during the trial. We also took sugar every Friday, and I was taking all these things back to Botswana. In those days I had stuff, man. There was a tree in my friend's house in Zeerust, an I left my things under that tree. I spent about four months away from there. When I came back to pick up these things nothing had disappeared. Compared to the people then, today they are pinching like anything. Nothing was missing.

I decided not to go to Kanye, and instead I went to Lobatse. But my father was in Kanye, and my home and my relatives were also there. People in Lobatse asked me why I didn't want to stay with my father, as I was a Mongwaketse.

I said, "Do you have a dog?" When they answered yes, I would say, "When your dog is barking outside your compound, what is it going to do when it comes inside your yard?"

"It will continue to bark."

Then I used to say, "Would it continue to bark behind the house or would it stay in front?"

They would say, "In front."

Then, I just said, "Yes, I am staying right here and not going to Kanye, because I am barking right here, like a dog. When the dog reaches the yard of his owner, he is barking back at where he came from."

CHAPTER FIVE

The ANC Underground in Botswana

Now resident in his native Bechuanaland Protectorate for the first time in over a decade, Keitseng continued his involvement in the ANC. It was in 1960, following the Sharpeville Massacre, that the ANC and other anti-apartheid movements were banned by the South African government.

In the aftermath of the bannings, the ANC decided to launch an armed struggle against apartheid in conjunction with its long-standing ally, the already underground Communist Party, which had been banned since 1950. The ANC's military wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe [MK], was then formed in 1961. This fledgling guerrilla movement focused on sabotaging government buildings and infrastructure. Its members were brave and, although lacking in resources and training, managed to carry out several hundred bombing attempts in their first few years. Inevitably, though, the movement was penetrated and crippled by the South African government. Once MK lost the element of surprise, the apartheid regime began arresting and eliminating its operatives. By 1963, Umkhonto had no choice but to exit South Africa if it was to survive.

From April 1960 onwards, increasing numbers of ANC and SACP members, as well as refugees from other organisations such as the Pan African Congress (PAC), began to leave South Africa. Most were under the threat of arrest by the South African Police, while others were young would-be freedom fighters eager to obtain military training in exile. During the early 1960s, much of the ANC leadership moved north en masse, eventually establishing exile bases in the newly independent African states of Zambia and Tanzania.

Most of these ANC leaders and young militants passed through the Protectorate, since it was on the South African border and was considered safe to enter. It was not always easy for exiles to make their way safely through the Protectorate for agents of the apartheid regime and their fellow travellers operated with impunity in the country, at times kidnapping exiles.[46] To facilitate such nefarious activities, the South Africans routinely bribed policemen, a process that is alleged to have continued throughout the entire apartheid era. Nor did bribery end with the police, since the South Africans also had a number of paid Batswana informants who acted in various capacities. Apart from the threat of kidnapping, the South Africans were willing to use violence, and Keitseng describes an assassination attempt against himself.

The ANC underground pipeline that operated in the Protectorate in the face of these pressures was not a particularly sophisticated operation. Keitseng, who was the key man involved, had no training in military intelligence of any kind. Moreover, it was never a secret that Keitseng was the ANC point man, and everybody knew where he lived in Lobatse. Keitseng was primarily responsible for moving people north. But because he was so well known, he was rarely involved in MK infiltration of South Africa.

In the earliest years of the pipeline, 1960-2, Keitseng had no phone and no vehicle. He received relayed messages and cash from the young Umkhonto officer, Joe Modise, who would go on to head the MK before becoming South Africa's Minister of Defence after the end of apartheid. Following the reception of information, Keitseng would either await or pick up ANC members. In the case of prominent leaders, Keitseng had to keep them safe until a charter plane was organised to take them north. Rank and file members, though, went north by ground transport. Keitseng took these activists north on the train up to Francistown. At this point they rented or borrowed a vehicle, and usually drove up to Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia.

The choice of routes was dictated by changing circumstances. Until December 1963 the two Rhodesia's and Nyasaland were still loosely united under settler control as the Central African Federation. But by 1962 there was already a sharp divergence in the policies of these territories towards the transit of refugees. By this time the Rhodesian Front government in Southern Rhodesia was working closely with South Africa, and it became risky for Keitseng to enter its territory. Northern Rhodesia, however, was on its way to becoming black-ruled Zambia. So Keitseng preferred to take his charges north from Francistown, across the Kalahari Desert, to the Northern Rhodesia border at Kazungula. Although this is an easy ride today, in the early 1960s it entailed several days' journey in a rugged four-wheel drive vehicle.

In late 1962 Keitseng's operations became simpler after some Land Rovers were purchased for his use. He was then taught to drive by Jack and Rica Hodgson, two ANC members who lived in Lobatse in early 1963.[47] In addition, he benefited from a phone that was installed in his house. With the vehicles in hand, Keitseng began driving his charges up to Kazungula through the desert. In 1963-64 this became a full-time activity, with one return trip to the north after the other. As a result of these developments, the ANC pipeline became an efficient two-way operation—carrying guerrillas south and refugees' north. As a British Special Branch report from early 1963 notes about this pipeline:

"It was discovered that they were still doing so using a secret route straight through the Bechuanaland Protectorate and not staying here and waiting for something to turn up as the PAC were doing... We have the PAC passing through the Protectorate fairly openly and without much organisation behind them and we have the ANC passing through with a very efficient organisation behind them....[48]"

Keitseng at this time relied on intermittent help from a network of Batswana sympathisers. Most of these men were ANC veterans, while others were members of the Bechuanaland People's Party. These sympathisers included Klaas Motshidisi, a young union activist in Palapye; Anderson Tshepe, a Francistown resident who had obtained military training in China; Michael Dingake, a future Robben Island inmate; Mack Mosepele, who had been in the 1946 Mine Workers strike and the Newclare protests; and Motsamai Mpho, the ex-treason trialist now living in Palapye. These men worked as drivers and provided safe houses when Keitseng asked them to. In addition to these men, Keitseng worked in tandem with the full-time Umkhonto operative Dan Tloome—who moved to Lobatse in mid-1964.[49]

This small and informal cell worked effectively for about six years. Dingake, who was attempting to form a bigger ANC structure in the Protectorate, was arrested in Rhodesia in 1965. Following this setback, Keitseng's ANC was rendered inoperative following the 1966-69 ANC Wankie Campaign infiltration's into Rhodesia from Zambia. During this offensive, a number of ANC operatives fled into Botswana and were arrested. Under pressure from its white-ruled neighbours, the Botswana government brought charges against these captured Freedom Fighters—who were led by Chris Hani. Eventually, Hani and 33 other Umkhonto men served two-year jail terms and the ANC was forced to reduce its presence in Botswana.[50] Tloome, for instance, was recalled to Lusaka.

Once the Wankie Campaign petered out in 1969, the ANC entered a period of relative stagnation. With its exile bureaucracy bogged down in the north, the cash-strapped organisation recalled Keitseng's vehicles to Lusaka. Meanwhile, funding for the refugee pipeline, which had been supplied to Keitseng by various international organisations after 1963, also dried up. The decline of the ANC operation in Botswana could not, however, undo its significant success in serving as the conduit for the establishment of ANC's exile wing.

"When I got to Bechuanaland I bought a small house in Lobatse. It was just made out of soil, wood plus thatch. It cost £21. Now, you know, when people came to greet me at my new home, I gave them soap, sugar, coffee, and tea, because I was taking them free from that Chinaman during the Treason Trial. My house was full, full, full of that Chinaman's stuff. Later on, as I was not working anymore, my things began to get finished. In 1959, when I came, the ANC had not yet started in Botswana, so I needed a job. I told myself that I must learn how to build properly, so I bought squares, trowels, and everything that a builder needs. Then I went to a guy with some government contracts, the guy who owned Lester Bros. He was a very rich man, with lots of lions and animals on his farm in Lobatse. [51] I got about £1 a week.

I worked with this chap for some months, until his contract was buggered, and I was just living in Lobatse. Then Joe Modise, Commander of the Defence Force today, came to find me. It was late in 1960. Modise was younger than I was, but he was very, very sharp that chap. His father was a Motswana, from Serowe, but he went to live in Johannesburg and married a South African.

When Modise came from Johannesburg, he told me, "Look man, you know that God can help us. Now we're going to give you another job. We are bringing the boys from that side, and now you must work with these chaps. When the Boers kicked you out, they didn't know that you were going to help us here. You are going to fix up where we stay at night and eat when we come here."

Then I went with Modise in his car to Serowe, to Bobonong, and some other places up there. We were looking for places where refugees were crossing. Along the way we

were talking with the people there, telling them where to guide the refugees. Most of those people that side were not so much into politics, but they always helped the refugees. I don't think any of them became a sell-out. All along the border we had many helpers.

After we got back Modise said, "Now we are going to buy you a truck. Hey man, those guys did not buy me a vehicle for a long time, so I had to struggle. I was taking our boys by the train up to Francistown, and then I was organising some people to drive us from there.

From the time Modise came my position was that I was in charge of the ANC in this country. The ANC in Botswana at that time, in the early 1960s, was made up of myself, Klaas Motshidisi in Palapye, and Anderson Tshepe in Francistown. Sometimes Tshepe would come with me and cross into Kazungula. In 1963 the Hodgsons were also working with us, but they did not stay here so long because the government forced them to leave. Motsamai Mpho also helped, though, he was a little bit of a coward when he came to Botswana. We were deported from South Africa, both of us, but stayed a bit far from me when he came here. He was sharp that side, but when he came here he became a little bit quiet, because he was close to Seretse. He told Mpho, "I trust you, you can become President, but you must leave this bloody communist." They called me a bloody communist.

After Modise came, things became very hot. People were coming all the time, crossing—from Zeerust to Bechuanaland. Sometimes they just went through the border post, sometimes they jumped over the fence. The ANC had many couriers in the Zeerust area, and messengers came all the time to wake me up at night: "People are there, just over the border. We want to bring them over." Then, if we had a car, we went to pick them up. Sometimes there was no car, so we had to walk far.

When these people began coming through, I got my sister's child, who was attending school. And that little girl, whenever people would come, she would wake up and make food for them. After they ate they would read a letter written by James Hadebe.[52] Then, in the morning, we would take them to the Police Station. This was because the Boers used to cross all the time, and the government of Bechuanaland wanted any person arriving in the country to report to the District Commissioner. This way the government could go and collect any person taken back illegally by the Boers because they had a record of their arrival. The British government was very much on our side. They may have hated our colour, but in terms of action, they were on our side. We used that.

Some ANC guys came here and they were very suspicious, because they found the police by my place. There was one cop from Lesotho called Kiba who used to assist us. He was BP Special Branch but he was working with us. One guy we picked up once thought I was a sell-out, "But why do you go straight to the District Commissioner? We know you're a policeman. On that side of the border they have policemen. Man you're just the same on this side."

"No, we're not the same. We want your names after you arrive here. If anything happens we follow it."

So when five or ten or fifteen guys came here, we would go to the District Commissioner to sign some papers. I always told them they must tell the truth and they must all say the same thing. Nobody was supposed to say different things from the other ones, so we could keep to the same line. No, most British officers we dealt with were very good to us. Very, very good.

To those District Commissioners in Lobatse I was just a regular friend. All of them except one chap, coming from Malawi, called Billing.[53] Oh, that was a rascal. Rascal! He used to tell me, "You Mr. Keitseng, why always you bring these people? Why are they afraid of their own country?"

Then I said to him, "Look, you are a white man in Bechuanaland, and these guys are African people in Africa. They are black, I'm black. What is the difference to me between me and him?" Hey, he was surprised when I talked back to him. Mr. Billing! Another DC called Steenkamp [54] was very good. When refugees would come we would report to his house rather than at the office because it was safer. The enemy had many agents, and Steenkamp knew how to avoid them.

Hey, I've got a lot of stories about the pipeline. At first when we were starting, and people were coming north, they used to phone me. But a lot of information was leaking to the police. Always thereafter, there was somebody coming to inform me through word of mouth. I was also keeping the money of the ANC. Somebody used to come and bring it to me. Lots of money. I was so fat in those days, not like today when my trousers are too big. I was fat because, when I travelled with the guys, we were not starving. When I was in the struggle I knew that I should make myself be a little sharp. After Mr. Hodgson came, in 1963, he was keeping the money, and later on some other guy called Brownlow.[55] But I always kept a lot of cash for travelling purposes.

The first group I took north was twenty-one nurses coming from Johannesburg.[56] A local nurse, Neo Raditladi, was their leader, she was the sister of these Raditladis who are from Serowe. They came to me in Lobatse, saying they are refusing to carry passes. I went to Steenkamp. I told him I have nowhere for these people to sleep. Steenkamp

found one house for them by the hospital. We took them, much later, by train, to Tanzania. They came just after Tambo went to Dar Es Salaam. Later I used to see some of them when I went north.

But the chap I remember looking after the most was our leader, Nelson Mandela, which was not long after I began receiving people. One day I was in my room, plastering the walls in the afternoon, and I had not been contacted by the ANC about any people coming. Then I saw Mandela stopping by my house in a car, driving with an Indian chap.[57] He says, "Hey man, I'm looking for you. I tried to book at Lobatse Hotel, but they refused. So now I'm looking for you."

I said, "Come in." I left my tools, and gave him one of my small rooms. By this time I was starting to extend my place to keep the people who I was putting up. Mandela's room didn't even have a real door, just a piece of wood hanging from the wall. After discussing things with Mandela and Kiba, we agreed we mustn't take Mandela to see the DC. He had already been underground a long time, and they were calling him the "Black Pimpernel". Although Mandela didn't go to the DC, the police knew he was present. Both sides were just pretending to ignore one another.

Mandela slept there with me. At five o' clock in the morning, he woke up. He said he wanted to go do some training. He didn't even want to wait for tea, and he only drank some in the evening.

We went on top of a big hill, Peleng Hill, crossed it, and then went by the Kanye road until we went on top of another hill near Bathoeñ's Siding. You know, Mandela used to eat just once a day. Also, if we stopped somewhere to rest, he used to read books. He said he was teaching himself how to be a freedom fighter. The man was always that way. If you want to cut the tree, you must first sharpen the axe.

Mandela was just staying in Lobatse with me. We spent many days together, going out training in the bush. Some of the time Max Mlonyeni would join us. One day I received a phone call, coming from Tanzania, telling me that they wanted Mandela there. That same night, somebody knocked, and I thought maybe it was the police. It wasn't them, but instead it was Joe Matthews, that rascal.[58]

He says, "Look man, we are going to Tanzania with Nelson."

But I started to shiver. I trusted the old man, Z.K. Matthews, [59] but not his son—I just did not trust him. He was a rubberneck. I decided to go find another Indian who lived in Mochudi, called Sam Chand,[60] who was good to us. Early in the morning I took them to his house. Mandela was supposed to go to Kasane by car to get a plane, but the airstrip was damaged there. So instead they changed the plan and they brought the plane to Lobatse. Chand and I took Mandela and Matthews to the plane when it arrived, and they went.

I don't know how long Mandela was gone. For some months he was touring all the countries up there in the north.[61]

One day I got another phone call. "Mr. Keitseng, if you've got some people, bring them to Mbeya by plane. If you arrive before us, don't move anywhere." I wasn't told I was going to pick up Mandela, but I could tell something important was up. Three people had arrived at my house so I took them and rented a charter from Bartaune, who had earlier flown Mandela to Tanganyika. [62] He was a big chap who used to fly a lot of our people to safety. Others were also dealing with him. Once, when I was at our headquarters in Lusaka I found him discussing payments with Makiwane. On this trip another pilot who worked for Bartaune flew. [63] So many people were flying that Bartaune had bought an extra plane. We went, and slept in Kasane, because we left at half past two here and it was dark when we arrived. In Kasane at that time there the Station Commander was a British chap, Mr. Webber. [64] This guy was just like Billing, because he used to always give us trouble. "You people, you always bring these South African people here. What do they want?" We used to fight, to clash with him.

We tried to find where we could put up for the night. There is a big tree there, a *mowana* tree, inside which they used to lock the criminals up. Webber told us to sleep down there. Fortunately, there was one policeman who liked us, and he said he didn't know what this white man was thinking. This guy took us to the hospital, and a Malawi chap who was working there got us mattresses. We slept there, and early in the morning we got on the plane again.

It was about twelve o'clock when we arrived in Mbeya. Because we were told we mustn't move anywhere, we just stayed and waited. Later on Mandela came with Tambo, and we slept in the railway hotel. We discussed plans the whole night. They wanted to know if it was safe to go back through Bechuanaland. I told them it was risky, because these Boers were on the lookout for Mandela night and day. They were everywhere in Lobatse. Some were sell-outs, and the others were South African Special Branch. We were watching them and they were watching us. In the newspapers Mandela was saying he was returning to South Africa, so these guys were waiting for him.

Mandela was determined to take chances. He said he was going home. I said we must not land the plane at Lobatse, but we must land at Kanye. Then these Boers would not know he had arrived in Bechuanaland. In the morning we got in Mr. Bartaune's plane. It was me, Mandela, and that pilot. The other three that I came with went to Dar Es Salaam with Tambo.

When we got on the plane Mandela gave me a big sack of bullets, a big bag. And I also took his gun, a big pistol, and put it under my jacket.[65] After a long ride we came

to Kasane. We went into the bar, and sat down at a table. Mandela says, "Man, I'm thirsty. Can you buy two stout beers?" I went, but when I got there they said, "The Africans are not allowed to buy liquor in this area." Mandela was upset. He came, and said "Can you repeat that again?"

"In this place Africans are not allowed to buy liquor."

"Can you quote a book of law that says that?"

The barman, failed to explain. He gave us a beer. We drank, and then we got in the plane again.

When we were over Moshupa, I saw some people waiting by the Kanye airstrip—far, far away. We were a bit nervous but I told Mandela that we must land there anyway.

When we jumped from the plane, there were two men who had come from Lobatse. It was Innes-Kerr, who was Special Branch, and Mr. Grant, the DC of Gaborone. [66]

Innes-Kerr greeted me, then he greeted Mandela. Mandela says, "I'm not Mr. Mandela. I'm David Motsamayi."

"Honestly, Mr. Keitseng, I know you're coming and I know you're Mr. Mandela. I think I must do something about you." This policeman, he didn't think about guns, he didn't ask me what I had in my coat.

Then Mandela, said, "Yes, I am Mandela."

But Mandela was very suspicious of these guys, and he looked at me and asked me if I had a car to take him to Lobatse. "Can you take me to Lobatse?" the problem was that our pickup was nowhere in sight.

I said, "Don't worry. Let's get in their car man. Let's go." We got in. Just about fifteen miles from Kanye we met our car coming from Lobatse, and we got in it. The policeman, he said, "Mr. Mandela, please don't cross before I go see what's taking place over the border."

Mandela, he smiles, and says to me, "This chap he wants me to be arrested. Why is he interested in me?" When he got to Lobatse we went to Joe Matlou's. Mandela, he didn't even take a cup of water. He didn't even stay for five minutes. He took his clothes, put them in the car, and we went. We took Mandela down by the border. At the gate there was just a Mongwato policeman there, Rakola. At that time there was no question of a passport. They would just ask you your name and where you are going to. Rakola just opened the gate, no questions. Modise was there and picked up Mandela. I never saw him again until he came here in 1992.

After he left me, he went to launch the armed struggle. You know, when these chaps used to go back home, the first thing they did was to go and see the woman. But this

chap, Mandela, he went straight to see Chief Luthuli, the ANC president. I think the second day he was already as far as Durban, where Luthuli lived. When he arrived there, he said, "Old man I'm going to jail. I'm going to jail. I know they are after me. I'm going to give you all the information I got in the places where I was travelling. We are well accepted by all the whites and the blacks. I travelled to many countries, and now please, I'm going to jail, you must continue the struggle, even if I'm in jail."

These people were looking for him. They used to have very sharp information, making roadblocks all over until they arrested him. I think he spent about nine months in court while his case was on, until he was sentenced. Then he went to Robben Island. [67]

Later on Modise came back after dropping Mandela off, and picked up the guns and half of the bullets we brought from Mbeya. I kept the rest in a hole under my house in Lobatse under a piece of iron. I tried to apply for a gun permit for myself, but Mr. Billing, he refused! But that time gun licenses were free to everybody, but he refused me because he said I was too dangerous.

Later that year, Mr. Jack Hodgson came to Lobatse. He and his wife began keeping the ANC money and working with me.[68]

I was with them in jail in the Treason Trial case. I didn't expect them to come to Lobatse, but one day I got a phone call, from Jack Hodgson, at the Lobatse Hotel. I went to see him at the Lobatse Hotel. I didn't really know him in Treason Trial, just the name.

In Botswana at that time we didn't have the idea that a white man and lady could eat with an African. We weren't supposed to mix with them, we were supposed to stay away. It was a natural idea we had. So when I went to see them we talked for a while. Then they began eating some food there, and I started to go.

They said, "Why are you leaving? You know we were together in No. 4. We are in the same struggle."

I said, "No, I am leaving. I am not hungry." I was making excuses, because I had the idea of not being with whites.

But those people insisted I eat with them.

One day Hodgson came to me and said, "We got money, from Tanzania, and now we're going to buy a truck for you." So he used to take me in his car, a Volkswagen, and was teaching me how to drive just outside of Lobatse. Then, when I was learning, I doubted that I could drive this Volkswagen. But Hodgson he forced me to drive. We would go in the morning, and then after lunch. We continued until I caught how to do it. After that he got money from Tanzania and bought a Land Rover from Germiston. [69]

At that time I was a normal person who was used to travelling by foot.

I remember one thing that happened to me at that time, when I was learning to drive that Volkswagen. I was in my place, waiting for a lot of boys who were coming through. Then I saw two chaps coming. They came to talk to me, speaking very funny, talking in Zulu. "Can I see Mr. Katsing? Mr. Katsing?"

"What, who is Mr. Katsing?"

"No, we've been told by our lawyer to come and see you. You will help us to cross." You know, these guys had a lawyer who was working before with Mandela.

"Where are you getting to?" I asked them. I was suspicious, because the ANC did not have many Zulu guys who did not speak English or other languages.

"No, we are going to where the men are going."

"For what?"

"No, we want to go to the North."

"What do you want in the North? Who are you?"

He took the letter that his lawyer gave him. It was written by Douglas Lokela, an ANC chap. "We were arrested and then we were released on bail."

"What had you done?"

"We had broken into a house."

I said, "Look man, I am not interested in criminals. I'm interested in the people fighting for freedom. Please gentlemen, I'll give you some food. There's people cooking over there. If you need some money, I'll give you some, then you must go. I don't want it reported to the police that criminals are here. I don't want it. And I can't help you further. You understand?"

You know what he says to me, in his Zulu language, when they left? "We'll take any car. Any car which we see."

I didn't know which car they were talking about. That night they took Mr. Hodgson's Volkswagen! In the morning, I was going to town to fix up something that side and I heard that somebody's car was missing.

That day I got on the train to go north with some guys. When we got to Pilane, I saw those criminals jump on the train. I was so fed up with them. I said in Zulu, "Hey, you chaps, where have you come from?"

"Mr. Katsing, we took one car, but the petrol was finished on the way."

"What type of car was it?"

"The white Volkswagen."

Yassus man. Now I didn't want to see them. From there I didn't even want to look

in their faces. I said, "You chaps are very dangerous. I told you yesterday that I didn't want you to be arrested, now you are starting again and stealing our car. I'm going by train now, but I thought the car was left with the owner. "Where's that car?"

"We left it on the way there."

The police found that car and took it back to Mr. Hodgson. The criminals went with us to Francistown, but I didn't want to sit with them. I sat in another coach. When we got into Francistown, they broke into another shop again. When the police chased them, one went toward Rhodesia, the other running this way, south. One day I was in the police station in Lobatse with some new arrivals, I saw the guy, the one who was running south. He says, "Please tell my lawyer that I am arrested."

I said, "What? Didn't I tell you that I don't help criminals? We're freedom fighters, man, you can't tell us about anything. I don't want to hear from you chaps."

"But who will help us?"

"I don't know. I cannot be involved with you guys." He was sentenced for I don't know how long. I never went to see him. I'm sure they took him to Johannesburg. Criminals, good God!

Later I was afraid to tell Mr. Hodgson what happened to his car, because I saw these people, and now the police might ask why I did not report those criminals to the authorities. Hey, I was in trouble!

Anyway, because we had that Volkswagen back, Hodgson was able to teach me to drive. When I learned we started working like anything. We bought this Land Rover in Germiston, because one garage there would drive it up to Bechuanaland and deliver it to you. Then I got another one later on, a white one. Two Land Rovers. One was bought special for me. Later on I left one for Mpho, a small one, and I didn't worry about it because I had so many cars in those days that we used.

After they taught me to drive I started to work with them, using that Land Rover. A lot of people used to come, and some months there were fifty or eighty. Every week I had to go to Kazangula. Man, I was driving like hell. Like hell. I would collect people near the border at Lobatse, and then take them to Palapye, where Mpho and Motshidisi were staying. Many times we used to take the truck of Mr. Motshidisi, a J5, along with my Land Rover. I put the boys in his truck, leading us. Then we would pass to Kazangula.

It was a very long drive, because in those times the roads were not good. You had to drive slowly, not like now when you can easily drive to Kazangula in one day. To go there and return took one week. We would stop at six o'clock every night, wherever we would find a big tree, and make a big fire underneath. There were lots of animals and

many lions. That road from Francistown to Kazungula was packed with them. So first one of the boys would get on top of my Land Rover with a light, and we checked the whole area. We slept there, and then moved in the morning. Elephants were another problem, because they would drag trees over the road and close it. We had saws, axes, food, everything, because we knew we could possibly spend about weeks out there. Our boys were mainly from Jo'burg, so they were not used to these things. One time it was raining and the Land Rover was just stuck in the mud there. So I told these guys to get outside and push the vehicle. Well, they were wanting to refuse because they had these fancy shoes from Jo'burg, and there was too much mud outside. When they jumped from the Land Rover they just stood there, not wanting to step in the mud and push. Then, a lion just started roaring very loudly next to us! Those boys began pushing like nobody's business, let me tell you!

When we went to Kazungula, we expected to find guys there. Our comrades would go into Zambia, and then we brought others who were going to go back into South Africa. If people were not at Kazungula, waiting to go South, then I would go to Livingstone. You know how many times I went to Livingstone? I went about four times without passport. But they wouldn't allow you to get on that ferry without one. Whenever I decided to cross they would just say, "Get in your car, put the bricks in front of the tyres in the front and the back." I think these chaps thought I was a driver for some white man. Then we would cross the river. They never checked me once.

I remember one time I crossed at Kazungula. When I returned about a week later one of the Zambian ministers got in the ferry, but he fell in the water along with his car. I don't know what happened. I think he started the car, while he was crossing, even though he wasn't supposed to touch anything. Later they found his car, deep in the water. I was a bit afraid that time, as I had no passport, or anything, and I didn't want too much attention. My car was just next to his.

Sometimes we did things differently. If I knew there were many guys who were coming back south with us, then I used to find Motshidisi in Palapye, give him money, and tell him to get on the train and cross through Rhodesia. Then he was to cross at Victoria Falls, go to Livingstone, and then come back through Kazungula. In this way he could bring me some guys. Motshidisi and myself, we worked with the ANC in force.

While we were working for the ANC we helped other Freedom Fighters. I used to cooperate nicely with a PAC guy called Loabile, sometimes giving his people shelter. After he was killed later I tried to look after his son. When people came to us we would question them, if they were freedom fighters we would always help them. People from SWAPO and FRELIMO came through us, but some of the PAC chaps wanted to keep to themselves.

I used to clear people with headquarters before taking them north' In the early days we forward names by post, but we stopped doing this after Mandela's arrest, as it was too risky. The enemy was becoming sharper all the time. Once in a while we would be warned against bringing so and so. There was a chap Mathiso who I was told to leave behind as he was suspected of being a sellout.[70] He never left.

I remember one trip to Kazungula very well. I had about twenty-five chaps in Lobatse. I left with some of them by Land Rover, and put the rest on the train. I picked them in Francistown, and then I hired another truck there from a man in one of the locations. It was a 3-ton truck, and we put all the boys in the back. We also had one goat and one sheep to eat while we were travelling. You know, in those days I didn't want to starve. We had money at that time!

Then, when we passed Nata, that road was very, very dangerous. Just there the truck failed to go on. It had a problem. So I left the chaps there and came to Francistown with the driver of another truck. In the morning I went to Jimmy Haskins' shop, which was selling parts. When I was looking at the parts there, I saw one gentleman, a very nice gentleman. He spoke a very influential kind of English. I said, "This chap is not from this country. Why is he here?" I didn't greet him, because I didn't know him or what he was doing.

Later that day, I went back north on the road in my Land Rover, and found this white man in Nata, where his car was stuck in the sand. He had a 2-ton Chev, with four tins of petrol, and he was trying to go through to Kazungula. He was stuck quite close to our 3-ton.

He spoke very good English, that chap. "Hello, how are you," he was saying. "Can you please pull me out of the sand, sir?"

I said, "I can pull you, but you must go back to Francistown and go through Rhodesia. This car cannot make it."

He said, "No, I'm afraid sir that I couldn't possibly want to travel through that place."

I didn't know then he was a criminal. Anyway, I told him he couldn't make it without a Land Rover. So I left him, there, with his car in the sand. Later, he came along the road to where we were fixing our truck. He had a backpack, walking and panting. "Please, Mr. Keitseng, will you give me a lift to Kazungula?"

"You are not a policeman?"

"No, I'm not a policeman. My name is Jimmy. You can look through my pockets if you wish."

We searched him. Then we gave him a ride. On the way, our Ford was still failing.

We had to divide our people in half. I left him when I took the first group, and picked him up later with the other guys. When we got to Kazungula, Mr. Webber wanted to take him back to Francistown, but he refused. He crossed the river with me, but he left his bag behind in the truck. I think he might have left it purposefully because these policemen and Mr. Webber were interested in him. When we were in Zambia, he gave me a letter, saying that I can use his car. On the way from Kazungula road I met some policemen, who asked me where that white man was who was driving this Chev van. I said, "He's in Kasane." They went looking for him.

Anyway, we found his car by Nata. I stopped, filled up the tank, and took it, because the police used to stop me on the way. His car was very fast, not like a Land Rover. When we crossed Nata, I went straight through the police roadblocks without stopping! When I got to Francistown, the police tried to stop me again. When they found me, they did a search. But I didn't know what they were looking for in Jimmy's car. They couldn't find anything.

The guys told me, much later, that this chap Jimmy had a lot of money in his backpack. All those young fellows who came with me north, they shared that money. You, know, when I had crossed the river and came back after dropping him, I found some guys wearing nice clothes and listening to nice radios, but I didn't know where they got the money for those things. I didn't know.

Anyway, that guy, Jimmy, he said he would come after elections to see me in Botswana, but he never came. I don't know if he's still alive or not. But you know, I did hear from him one time. When it came time for the election, I got a phone call. "Is that Mr. Keitseng? This is Jimmy. Can you please help me? Do you know where my bag is, my big bag which I left with you there in Kasane? I left a lot of money in that bag."

I didn't know he had a lot of money in that bag. But I later found he had thousands of pounds with him.

That road to Kazangula was difficult, I tell you. It wasn't only my friend Jimmy who had problems there, because we freedom fighters suffered out there in the desert.

There were lots of animals on the road. One day I was in the truck, on the way back from dropping some guys. It was me, Michael Dingake, and Mack Mosepele. I was driving, and then a buffalo ran into the road. I hit it hard, and it just fell down. I stopped my car, and then just went outside and patted it on top of its head. I was so stubborn in those days, man. That buffalo was not dead, even though I hit him very hard, like the way a Dutch policeman hits a *kaffir*. When I touched that animal, he jumped up and ran into the trees.

I was happy that buffalo was still alive, but he finished our radiator. Our Land Rover

was messed, because it just lost its water quickly. So we could not travel in the day, because it was too hot. At night, I would tell Mosepele to go just a short distance before stopping, because the car had no water. All the water would be gone, even before we finished one kilometre. While the engine was cooling, we filled it with every drop of water we had, but when we put it there, it just went out again. We used to even piss in it. Our vehicle was so smelly! Smelly like anything! We spent many days out there, stuck. Nobody was passing to help us.

After several days I just said enough. At five o'clock, I told Dingake and Mosepele, "Chaps, we are going now." We followed a dry river to Nata, but from far away. It was in an area full of lions, and we kept finding where lions had killed animals and left the bones on the ground. We were so scared because we could see the spoor of the lions all over. But, we were lucky, and God helped us. Finally we arrived in Nata. Early in the morning, we took two tins of water, and I told Mosepele to get a lift and go back to the car, and take it just a little bit at a time. Then I went to Francistown in a truck, where I bought a second-hand radiator from Jimmy Haskins. After that, I found Mosepele, and then we went on to Lobatse.

I was so stubborn in those days. Even after hitting that buffalo I didn't care. When I would see an elephant I would beep the horn, and then put my foot down, and let them chase me! I was a young man then."

Some Well-Known Escapes

Keitseng has very good memories of three escape episodes involving senior ANC members in 1962 and 1963, all of which made headlines worldwide.

In particular, Keitseng has strong recollections of his escorting of 27 young ANC members, including the then head of the African Students Association Thabo Mbeki, into Rhodesia in early October 1962.[71] Keitseng took this group over the border, where they were probably betrayed. After falling into police custody, Keitseng was held in detention for six weeks and tortured, before being released with his young charges back to the Protectorate. Once there public pressure forced the British government to grant them asylum, and they eventually were flown north to Tanzania.

The second of these episodes involved two ANC activists and Umkhonto members, Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich, who, after being caught by the South African police, managed to escape from custody and make their way to Bechuanaland in August 1963. Once in Keitseng's care, they were eventually able to elude South African agents chasing them, and to make their way to Tanzania.[72]

A third incident revolved around the flight of three Umkhonto and SACP members, Ronnie and Eleanor Kasrils, and Julius First, which occurred in October 1963, not long after Keitseng had survived an assassination attempt by the South African Police.

"One day, in the morning, I saw a truck, a 3-ton truck. It was the day that Chief Kgari

Mainly I was questioned by two Rhodesians, one white and one black. The white one was called Gilbert, and he was just sitting there, writing, writing, writing, and he wanted to know all sorts of things. Why I was coming this way, that way, why we didn't go through the border gate if I had documents? He was not cruel, but was just very quiet. He kept questioning me about everything. I just used to answer straight, because if I dodged then the black policeman would just hit me. Also, we were guilty of crossing the border, so it was no use to tell lies.

Gilbert said, "You are bringing these people to Rhodesia to come and kill Whitehead.[75]"

"Well, I don't know that guy you are referring to." I made it look like I didn't know who Whitehead was.

I told them that the people I was with had no documents and I was trying to take them through illegally. Then they didn't say anything. They just wanted to question me, about my whole life. How long was I in Johannesburg? I didn't hide anything. I told them everything, about working in the mine, and all the other jobs I had in South Africa. You know my memory is bad now, so I'm sure that if we could find all the things that I told these guys then this book could be made a lot better!

When I was being detained in Rhodesia I discovered that the South African newspapers had been making a big noise about me. The ANC had a big meeting in Lobatse, and all the ANC leadership, guys like Tambo, Kotane and Sisulu, was holding private meetings at my house. They were discussing what to do with the MK now that Mandela was captured. The newspapers heard about these meetings, and were reporting that I was the organiser of terrorist meetings—but it was at the same time I was being tortured in Rhodesia!

For six weeks, I had to answer questions in Bulawayo. Always one white and one black policeman interrogated me. After that they were finished, and said, "You guys, you must go home now."

The guys said to me, "You can go home to Bechuanaland, but we are going to Tanzania. We know we are going to cross." We had tried to be deported to Tanzania, and had a lawyer. But the lawyer was just trying to get a lot of money. He couldn't help, because the Rhodesians said they cannot deport us to a country that we do not come from. They said they would send me to Bechuanaland, and they would deport the guys to South Africa. So I told our lawyer to phone Motsamai Mpho in Palapye to tell him what the Rhodesians were doing.

When we left they put us in a truck. Damn it, they hit me then. Then they put me on the train with the others. The Rhodesian cops were wanting to take the students to

South Africa, but they were not allowed to stay on the train when they came to Bechuanaland. [76]

We arrived in Palapye, but then I think the British government told the police to come and get us. They came on the train and told the people who were being deported to South Africa to get off, and to come to the police station. Mpho was there with many supporters. They had an ANC flag and were singing songs for us. Motsamai saved these students from being sent back to South Africa.

When we got to the police station, there was one white policeman named Cook, a big chap, who was giving me trouble. When I first went to Palapye to get the truck from Motshidisi, this guy had questioned me about where I was taking these chaps, and I lied to him. I had said I was touring my country, and wanted to go to Maun.

He said to me there, "You Mr. Keitseng, are always giving us lots of trouble. You told us you were going to Maun, but you didn't go there. Why are you bringing these people here now? Where are these people coming from?"

"From South Africa. Isn't that in Africa?"

"It is. But why?" Hey, we were quarrelling. He told me, "I don't want to see you here in Palapye tonight, you must all disappear like water."

But we just stayed there, because the train had gone. How could we leave? That policeman got angry, seeing me still there in Palapye. Later, he brought me to his office, and he phoned Kgosi Rasebolai,[77] who told him "These people I don't want to see them here. Tell them they must disappear." Then, Rasebolai talked to me on the phone, in his deep voice, saying he didn't want to see me or these South Africans because we hadn't told him we were coming. Why should we have told him we were going there? We were just going there with the idea of passing.

We just stayed there anyway, telling them we had no money! At about two o'clock the police came and gave us tickets to Gaborone. Then, when the train came we went, and we dropped at Gaborone. This DC, Grant, put some small tents there, by the General Hospital, for us. I spent about two days with Mbeki and the others in Gaborone before leaving them there to go to Lobatse.

When I got there, I found about fifteen more boys waiting there. I put them along with the twenty-seven at Gaborone on the train, taking them to Francistown. When we got there we slept for three days in a new community hall. Then I received a telegram from Tambo in Tanzania. He said, "Look, the people you have must come here."

So they organised a plane, paid for by Tambo. I put the first twenty-eight and this other group of fifteen on it at Francistown. There were too many to go at the same time, so we sent them in two loads. For a short while, I sent all the comrades to Francistown like that to catch the plane.

I remember another time, a few months later, when I helped two guys being chased like animals by the South Africans. Two lawyers from the ANC, Wolpe and Goldreich, were working for Umkhonto in Jo'burg, deep underground, and they were doing lots of sabotage. Goldreich was chap who knew everything about electricity and power generators. They even stopped the radio one time. I know their story because they told me. Police were looking for them all over, until they finally arrested them.[78]

Then the cops took them to prison in Marshall Square, so that they could appear in court to face charges. On that same day, one of our lawyers went to that jail to try and get them out. He found a policeman who was holding the keys where they were keeping Wolpe and Goldreich. He asked that guy, "How long have you been working?"

"Not very long."

"How much money do you get paid?"

"Not very much."

So the lawyer bribed this policeman, and he released them quietly.[79] By this time the underground people were ready, and they gave Wolpe and Goldreich preachers' clothes, and made them look like ministers.[80] Then they took them to Swaziland, and the police didn't take notice because they thought these guys were ministers. After some time they decided to come into Botswana, and they hired a plane.

I never knew that they were coming. But this policeman, Special Branch, John Sheppard, was in Lobatse at that time, watching all the planes flying in. When he heard a plane coming, he would rush to the airstrip. But that plane with Wolpe and Goldreich in it did not land. These chaps instead just jumped out with parachutes. So Sheppard saw these two Europeans falling on top of one big hill. He yelled at them from the bottom:

"Come down please. Come down. You'll be in lots of trouble."

Then Wolpe and Goldreich came down, and they told him they were coming to visit Botswana. But they didn't give him any information.

Just at that time I was at the butcher, buying mince meat. As I said, in those days I had lots of money. Sheppard came in the store, as I was paying, and said to me, "Fish, do you know these two guys?"

I said I knew Wolpe, but not the other one. One time Wolpe was defending me when I was living in Newclare.[81] I greeted them, and said they must report to the police station with Sheppard. After that they booked into the hotel under false names. After that I always used them, just for fun. I gave Joe Slovo and others false names, like "Pirow" and "Ginsberg".

Then I took these chaps to see Hodgson. Wolpe and Goldreich told me that there

were another seven people waiting at the border by Ootse. I left these guys drinking tea, and I went to collect these other seven by Ootse Hill, at Manyelanong, that place with white vulture shit.

I was calling through the trees, knowing that people were hiding there. Then I found Max Sisulu. I put him and the others in the Land Rover. I took them to eat at my place.

Hodgson, Wolpe, Goldreich, and I decided to go that night, because we thought that these two should not sleep in Lobatse. In those days it was dangerous in Lobatse, and South Africans were all over. I drove Wolpe, Goldreich, and the other seven in the Land Rover all night, and took them to the house of Steenkamp, who was now the District Commissioner in Francistown.

He arrived in pyjamas. "What is wrong, Fish?"

Then I told him that I'm bringing these guys. I left Wolpe and Goldreich there with Steenkamp. He took them to the jail and they slept there. He didn't think they were safe outside, because there were too many South Africans watching.

I called Anderson Tshepe to bring another car, and all the Africans went and slept in his house. Then I went back to Lobatse, because others were arriving. At this time people were jumping the border almost every day.

When I came back to Francistown two days later, I was with fifteen more comrades. Wolpe and Goldreich and these others were still there, but I thought they would be gone. They were still staying in the jail. Tambo sent a plane to fly them out, but it was blown up by these Boers. After they bombed that plane we couldn't find another pilot to take these chaps north.

After some days we found a plane, but we were still afraid the Boers would capture these chaps. So we decided to trick these Dutchmen. Tshepe took his lorry and put the seven black ANC boys in it. Then they picked up Steenkamp and another white guy at the jail! Then Tshepe started driving very fast towards Bulawayo. The South Africans thought Wolpe and Goldreich were with Tshepe and followed them.

When they left I took Wolpe and Goldreich in another car to Palapye, the other way. Some policemen followed us to see that we were safe. Then the plane came to Palapye to pick these guys up. These South African agents never saw Wolpe and Goldreich, and even me, I never saw them again.

After we helped those two leave Bechuanaland it became very dangerous. Before that the ANC often used to send me a letter informing me that people are coming, or maybe giving me a phone call. Then they found that people were getting arrested on the way, so somebody was taking those letters and reading them.[82] After that a person

always came from Zeerust and would tell me that in so many hours people would be coming to such-and-such a place. Then I had to go and meet them there.

It was at this time when we were becoming more tight in our plans that the South Africans tried to kill me. You know what happened, is that one-day I was coming from Francistown, or somewhere very far, at night. All the way from there on the road to Lobatse some people had been following and watching me. I parked the car near my house, and went to sleep.

Sometime that night I heard "Bang, bang!" something that sounded like a very strong bomb. So I got up, and when I looked outside I found my car, my ANC Land Rover BF 320, had been hit. Part of the car was gone, blown off. The police from South Africa, I know they bombed that thing.

I went to the Lobatse police station, in the middle of the night. You know at that place all they used was one candle. There was just one policeman, sleeping, next to the candle. I said, "Hey, man, wake up. Why are you sleeping? The people, they are killing us that side."

He said, "What happened?"

I said, "No, they are bombing us there. Please, phone to Gaborone."

The police were based in Gaborone then. Even though we called them at two o'clock at night, they came at 11 o'clock, in the middle of the next day. When they came they said, "What happened, what happened?" They didn't know me much, so they didn't know why I was bombed. Then they went to the Lobatse police station, and the police led them back to my place.

I said, "Well, they shot us last night." They just took a few pieces of iron, and went. They never came back again, they were useless.

When I examined my car, I found that fortunately there was not much damage. When I returned from Francistown I used almost all my petrol, but it was almost empty when I got back. If more petrol was in my tank probably twenty houses would have been demolished by that bomb. Let me tell you something. When you talk to a successful freedom fighter you will always find that they have lots of luck.

After that bomb went off, I was very angry with these Dutchmen. A few days later I read an article in the *Star* saying my car was destroyed, so I phoned the newspaper in Johannesburg. They said, "Yes, Mr. Keitseng, we hear that your car was burnt and now it is just ash."

I said, "Who told you that? My car was damaged by you people that side. I know. You Boers put that bomb under my car."

This reporter didn't want to tell me anything. "You bloody rascal. Don't insult me. If you want, send a letter making a written complaint."

I refused, and told him to go to hell. I was really swearing at that chap.

Later I replaced the Land Rover with a Chevrolet truck which I got from Johannes, Rantao, the uncle of Paul Rantao. [83] He was then staying with Dan Tloome. The Boers then tried again. One morning when I opened the hood of the Chev I heard this popping sound. The Boers had placed a bomb under the hood but it had failed to go off. I had lots of luck.

About three days after the first bombing [84] somebody told me that Mr. First was coming. I was supposed to pick him up at Mabule, just between Barolong Farms and Lobatse. My car was not working well, and I didn't know what to do. So I just went in my damaged Land Rover to pick up this Mr. First, the father-in-law of Joe Slovo. The Land Rover was not driving well, just shaking like a *tsotsi*.

I was alone, and when I was by the Barolong Farms I went into a garage owned by a Boer there. I asked him to fill up my truck. I had about two or three drums of petrol, but I wanted more because I didn't know how far Mabule was. This guy, he didn't know me, but he just looked at my Land Rover and realised that I was the person who was getting bombed by the South Africans. I'm sure he was reading the newspaper. He said, "I won't give you petrol. I cannot give you petrol." That is the only place I ever went where they refused to sell it to me.

So I passed, and when I got to Mabule I saw one white man looking through the trees, and then he ran away when I stopped. I said, "Mr. First, Mr. First. I'm Keitseng." He stopped. It was First and two others. It was also Ronnie Kasrils—today he is the assistant of Modise in the South African Defence Force—and his wife.[85] They were dressed like Indians. I put them in the car, and we went to Lobatse.

I didn't take them straight to the police station, because Billing was in Lobatse at that time and these three people were really being hunted by the South Africans. I knew Mr. Billing was going to report us. I smuggled them into the corner of my house, and we put sacks over them so nobody could see them. White people did not go to Peleng so I didn't think anyone would look for them at my house. They just stayed in the room, and I would take their bedpans every few hours. In the morning we went to see Captain Knight at the police station, because I knew he was okay.

"Captain Knight, I've got visitors here, now the old man Billing is going to refuse to accept them. What should I do?"

He said, "Let us go together to see him." We went into his office, and Billing didn't come to meet us. He just sat there in his chair.

I said, "Mr. Billing, I brought these people here from South Africa."

"Why are these White people coming here? Why are they running from their own country?"

"Mr. Billing, you are a White man and you've been living in Malawi, isn't it? Now you have come back to Bechuanaland again, why? You've been in Malawi and now you are here. Even these people, they are just moving around like yourself. I tell you, please record these people in your book. I will give you their names."

Billing, he didn't know who I was with, but I think he was guessing. Mr. First and Kasrils and the lady were all running from the police and they were in the newspapers. He tried to give us problems, "No, I am not going to do it."

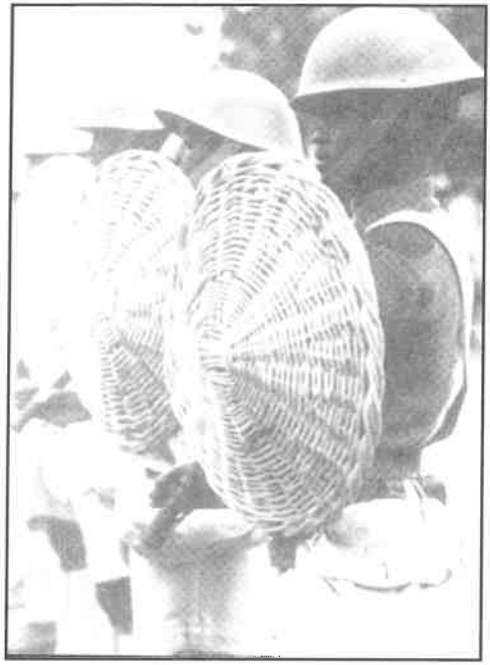
When I looked at Captain Knight, he made a movement with his eyes. He said, "Put these people under false names in the Lobatse Hotel."

I said, "What? How are you trying to help me?"

"Please, I'm telling you. Just go and book them under false names." Then I took them and put them in the hotel under unknown names. They slept there for some days, and I stayed in my house. Then, the phone call came for me from Tanzania, from Tambo: "Mr. Keitseng, we know Mr. First is there with other comrades. We want them in Tanzania. The plane is coming." He gave me the time the plane was coming, and I took them by Land Rover to the airstrip, and the plane arrived to take them.

After that I went into Lobatse to the place where they sold newspapers. I used to read them when I was not driving the comrades all over. That day there was a big story on Mr. First. One policeman in the newspaper was offering a big reward for him, saying "We need Mr. First in any way. In the water, in the trees, in any way we can get him."

So, I thought, it was just too bad that the police were not going to catch him. First, they were unable to kill me, and now they couldn't find Mr. First. We used to make life difficult for these Boers.



B.P. riot Police, 1964

J.B. Marks - the ANC/ Communist/Union leader who acted as Fish's political mentor.

Left - BIP rally in 1964. Motsamai Mpho in centre, speaking, Klaas Motshidisi sitting on the right.

Miners in Gauteng, 1940s

Left - Fish's Peleng safe house complex in 1996.

Right - Fish with Mosepele in 1996.

Harold Macmillan greeting Bathoen II in Francistown, Mr & Mrs Haskins (on left), Resident Commissioner Sir Peter Fawcus in white uniform (Obscured).

P.G. Matante in the Ghanaian robes given by Kwame Nkrumah.

Oliver Tambo & Nelson Mandela in Tanganyika, 1962.

Above - Wolpe and Goldriech as fugitives in Francistown

Left - Fish in 1962 outside Lobatse with two of the refugee nurses.

Above - South Africa Township, 1940s

South Africa Mine in 1940s

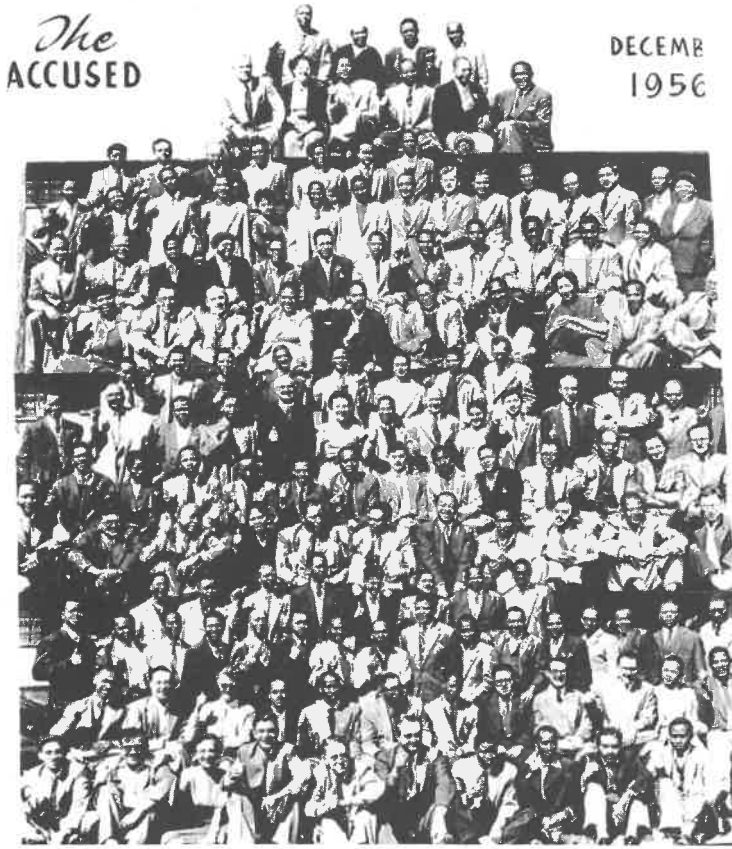
Above - Harold Macmillan inspecting police in Francistown during his stopover to deliver his "Winds of Change" speech in Capetown.

Line of VIP'S waiting to greet Macmillan (L-R) Seretse Khama, Louise Glover, Dr Silas Molema, Mr & Mrs Van der Gass, Kgosi Kgari Sechele, Mr & Mrs Jimmy Haskins, Kgosi Bathoen II, Mr & Mrs Russel England.

Fish in 1990's with his grandson Lerumo.

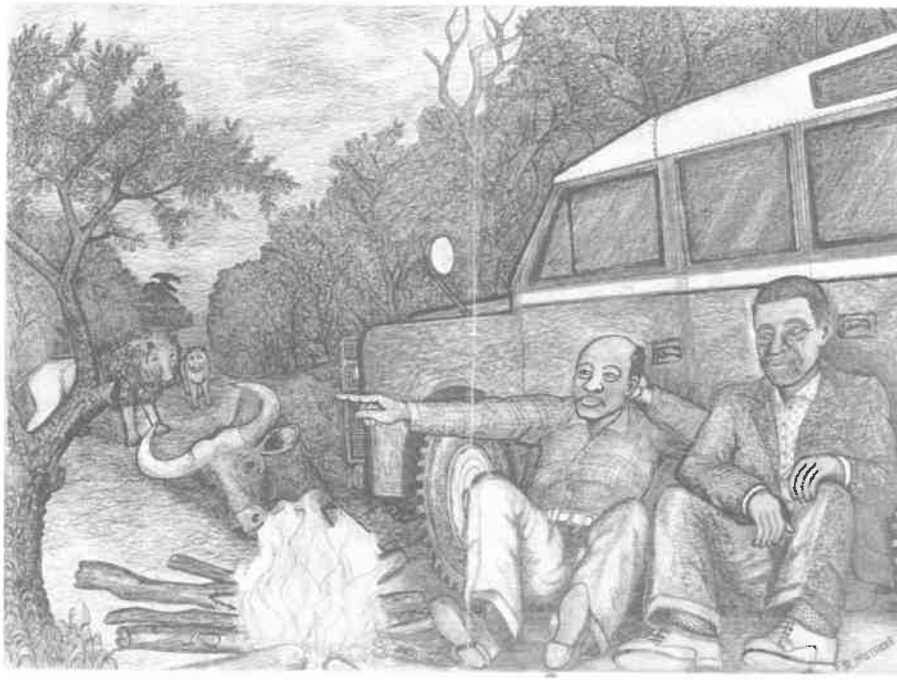
Group shot of delegates, including Fish Keitseng back row fourth from the left, at Labour Conference in Moscow, 28th Oct. - 2 nd Nov. 1963.

TREASON TRIAL



Wienburg's famous composite picture of the Treason Trial accused, including Fish Keitseng, 2nd row, 5th from left.

Because the authorities forbade the accused from gathering at one time Wienburg photographed the accused in groups which he then pasted up as one photo.



Artist Ranthefe Mothebe impression of Fish and Mike Dingake on the Kasane Road about 1963 (See page 62 in Chapter 5 on The ANC Underground).

CHAPTER SIX

My Role in the Nationalist Cause in Bechuanaland, 1961-5

Keitseng, in addition to his intense involvement in the pipeline in the early 1960s, also played a leading role in the emergence of nationalist politics within the Protectorate. Botswana's first truly national political party, the Bechuanaland Peoples Party, was formed in December 1960 when Keitseng's old Treason Trial comrade Motsamai Mpho drafted the party's constitution. Initially Mpho was the real mover in this party, which had a heavy component of former ANC members in it. Mpho himself was the party's Secretary-General, while the President, K.T. Motsete, was a figurehead.[86] By 1960 K.T. Motsete was past his prime but had the aura of a respected elder statesman for his work in education.

From the time of its first public meetings in the Bamangwato Reserve in February 1961 the party began to attract a mass following. In the same month P.G. Matante joined the party. As a gifted public speaker, he electrified crowds at the BPP's first public rallies in Francistown in March of 1961. At Motsete's suggestion Matante was appointed as the Party's Vice-President.

Here then were the seeds of the party's later destruction. The division of offices in the party was not made according to formal procedures. Nor were Mpho, an idealist with little street-sense, and Motsete, a man with ineffective organisational skills, able to contain the rise of Matante. Allegedly a former criminal and police informant in South Africa, Matante's new ambition was to take over the BPP as the vehicle for his own political ambitions. Keitseng and some other BPP members knew of Matante's dubious past in early 1961, but their fears were unheeded by the BPP leadership. Initially, though, the party's future problems were not apparent. By April the BPP was making rapid progress in many towns in the Protectorate, and in fact it became a source of increasing concern to the British, whose surveillance of the movement provides us with much of our knowledge about it.

Keitseng had not been involved in the initial formation of the BPP, because Mpho, Motsete, and other supporters all lived in northern centres like Mahalapye, Palapye, Serowe, and Francistown. But the new party fit in well with his own ambitions, as his South African comrades had proposed he establish a pro-ANC party in Bechuanaland. Instead he decided to combine his efforts with those of Mpho. Keitseng became the chairman of the party's Lobatse branch, as well as a member of its eight-man National Executive Committee. The Lobatse branch dominated BPP activities in the southern Protectorate, as its membership consisted of ex-ANC members seasoned in the Anti-apartheid campaigns.

Keitseng's Lobatse branch membership soon deplored Matante's rise to prominence in the organisation, particularly as many of its members had known him in the Rand. As Matante gained personal control over the BPP, Keitseng and others began to raise questions about his unauthorised take-over of the party treasury.

By early 1962, Matante fought back with Motsete's support and sought to isolate and expel his critics from the BPP.

These concerns set the stage for Matante's and Motsete's unilateral suspension of Keitseng and other Lobatse branch leaders on June 27, 1962, an action which set into motion a chain of events that culminated in their suspension of Mpho four days later. Motsete and Matante justified their actions as part of a campaign to eliminate 'dangerous Communist influence' from the Protectorate. Their expulsion was opposed by the other six members of the National Executive committee (including Keitseng and Mpho). Ultimately the party split into pro-Mpho and pro-Motsete/Matante factions in August 1962.

In the aftermath of the BPP split, Keitseng joined Mpho's faction, which in 1963 adopted the name Botswana Independence Party (BIP). Despite increasing strains between himself and Mpho, Keitseng remained loyal to the BIP during the country's first one person one vote elections in March 1965. He traversed the southern Protectorate, campaigning for the BIP on a bicycle. His efforts, though, were in vain. The disintegration of the original BPP allowed the better-funded and more conservative Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), led by Seretse Khama, to sweep the election. Matante managed to win three seats in parliament, and until his death in 1979 remained a leading opposition figure. Keitseng retains bitter memories of Matante, who he feels quashed progressive politics in Botswana for a generation. He is also critical of Seretse Khama, who served as the country's president until his death in 1980. Seretse, he feels, was first and foremost a chief. He was also too often the tool of white colonial interests, while remaining insensitive to many of the needs and concerns of the impoverished masses.

Keitseng's version of the events leading up to the BPP's 1962 split is the second published account by a participant, following that by Mpho.[87] The latter's valuable account provides a wealth of information about the early BPP, though it fails to explain the dynamics of the rise of Matante. Keitseng's version demonstrates clearly how Botswana's premier nationalist movement was corrupted by Matante's cynical opportunism. In this regard, Keitseng's story is much more in accord with police surveillance records than Mpho's, though Keitseng provides crucial information never obtained by police.[88]

"You know, when I think about the BPP, I mainly think about one chap—Philip Matante. That chap was a rascal, he was no good for anything. He could never have ruled any country, that guy. He liked being a leader too much, but he was not a leader. He didn't know how to treat the people properly, he was a sell-out.

When we started the party we didn't know him. He just came in like a vulture or something. He just came in, and said, "I'm president." Matante claimed to be a hero but he was causing confusion, that guy—talking, fighting, and selling the people at the same time. That was his intention. He could never speak the truth, and whenever he said anything he was trying to destroy you. If he found that you were very strong, he would try everything to hurt you. To weak people he was a bully. He liked to be known

as "the scorpion." He used to go up to a person and say, "I'm the scorpion, my sting will kill you."

Nobody knew where this chap was from. We knew him first as Madande, then Matante. When he went to Francistown, he claimed to be a Mokalanga. When he was in Mochudi, he was a Mokgatla, and when he went to the farms in Borolong, he was a Morolong. Although he really claimed to be a Mongwato, I doubt it though they say his mother was from Serowe. Nobody knows where he came from, but I'm sure he was living in South Africa. Most people, they didn't know where he was from. Myself, I didn't know where he was born, but I knew everything else about him.

This information is important, because some youngsters think Matante was a hero, but we older people know what type of a man he was. What I know from when I lived in Jo'burg is that Matante was a *tsotsi*, a thug. When I was living in Jo'burg Matante was also there, staying in Alexandra. It's where I first saw him. I didn't have a grudge against him, I only saw him at ANC meetings. I was very active in the ANC at that time as a volunteer in the Defiance Campaign, but I never saw him except at meetings where he would come with a camera. He was sacked in the party, by the Head Office, because when we held meetings at night, he would first go straight to police and tell the police what we were saying there. That's why the ANC threw him out. Then he aligned with PAC ideas. He was an Africanist, saying he didn't want to mix with white people and communists, like the ANC was doing. Matante claimed to be a member of PAC, but he was not. He knew that the PAC was not here in Bechuanaland, so he just claimed to be that so that people would think he was respectable. Because he said he was PAC, he now had an excuse to attack the ANC, because PAC said the ANC was just talking, that we didn't want to fight against the Boers.

When I was in prison I heard more about his character. Boston Tar Baby, who was protecting me in prison, was a criminal in Alexandra, and he knew Matante. He and these other criminals in Spoilers gang told me that Matante was a police informant. They knew that because he was not loyal to any gang. He would join one group, and then if it became weak, he just jumped to another one. These prisoners in jail told me that he was a criminal, but not a real criminal, just someone who was jumping from one group to another. When they spoke like this, what they were saying is that they were going to kill him. Matante had acted as a secretary of the Boer policeman known as "Machine Gun", collecting money for him from gang members. After Matante was sacked from the ANC, he left Johannesburg, and went to Bloemfontein, or Port Elizabeth, somewhere down there. Then after that, he went to Francistown, claiming he was a Mongwato from Bechuanaland.

You know, when I first went back to Lobatse the ANC were telling me that I should form a party in Bechuanaland. There was myself, Mpho, and many other refugees and other Batswana who were living before in Johannesburg who could become members. But then, Mpho came into contact with Motsete about forming the People's Party. He made a constitution for Motsete, which was just the same as the ANC constitution. So it was just useless for me to form a different party.

The BPP was started by Mpho and K.T. Motsete. When I joined the party I didn't know Motsete much, but I found out that he was not politically mature. [89] These guys later came to Lobatse for a meeting to start the Lobatse branch so myself and others could join the BPP. [90]

At that meeting Motsete elected Matante to be Vice-President of the BPP, but he didn't know what he was doing. Motsete was not politically minded, he was a professor but didn't know how to lead people. The old man, Motsete, he just said, "This chap Matante was a soldier, he might help us." But Motsete didn't know him. Before that Motsete was living in Sophiatown but hadn't been involved in the ANC at the time we were defying the Boers.

After the meeting one chap called Chelepe came up to me and asked me if I didn't know Matante was a sell-out. Chelepe was not so much interested in politics, but he was a big strong chap who feared nobody. Before he came to Lobatse he was a gangster in Jo'burg, and he knew Matante there. Another chap, Jack Kefentse, also came up saying Matante was no good. I told them I knew this guy, but we didn't say anything about Matante at first because we thought we would bring in more members to the party to help us. We were still a small group at the beginning. Others later accused us for not opposing Matante, but at the beginning he didn't look so dangerous.

After that meeting I was on the National Committee of BPP until they fired me.

During 1961, when the BPP was becoming very popular, I was still working for Lester Bros. At that time, the ANC was still not so active in Bechuanaland, so I was working and organising for BPP on weekends. I was in control of the BPP Lobatse branch. One day, I was coming back from Lester Bros, with Charles, the son of the owner. He liked me that chap, we used to walk home together all the time. That day we came from Gaborone on the train, where we were building some houses that side. When I reached home, I found an old woman with blankets over her face.

She told me that she had been to one shop in town, which used to be owned by a guy named Hill, just where Pep store is today. Then this Jewish guy who managed the store went to Johannesburg, and another Dutch guy from Tzaneen came and became

the new manager of this shop. Two days after he came, he began sending out a boy on a bicycle to tell people to bring the money they owed him on credit. These old ladies, who were buying *momela* on credit from the Jewish manager, used to pay only after they made *bojalwa* and sold it. They told the Boer that they hadn't brewed their beer yet, and they couldn't pay him.

I was a politician, so I went with these ladies to talk to the Boer. His name was Piet Nel. He was speaking Setswana very fluently, and I think he was born near Zeerust. I said, "We hear that you are sending somebody to collect money from our parents. These people are not working, and they take ingredients on credit to make beer and then they make money. How can they pay you in advance? Why you do this?"

He said, "I've got no time for the old woman. I want some money from her."

I said to myself, "If this guy is dealing with us in such a way, we're also going to deal with him."

We were getting many complaints, so we had a public meeting.[91] Lots of people came, and the police were surrounding us. I was the speaker. We agreed that nobody would go in that shop. We made placards to give to the boys, which said, "*Shop e, ga e tsenwe*". We had placards and people on both sides of the shop. We were boycotting.

After two days, the Boer owner came back from South Africa. We told him these old ladies did not want to pay him. "We understand that you are the owner of this shop. You see there is a village here. That Jewish owner was selling tools to people to make beer, and now your manager is refusing to do so. Why?"

He says, "I don't know. That man is doing things by his own instruction." These Dutch, they are just Dutch, even if they are rich!

We told him we were going to stop his shop, but he thought we were playing. He left.

Then we called another meeting, and told the people not to use this shop. When the boys passed in front of the shop with placards, everybody could see what was happening. The police were there, but they said that the people carrying placards could not be arrested. What had they done?

The manager was saying, "You must catch those *kaffirs*." He forgot that he was using the word "*Kaffir*" with black policemen. They refused to help him.

The shop was just empty because of our boycott. We called the place *Botsetse*,[92] and no one would enter. We were using the same system that we used in Johannesburg. We were singing this song, "We don't eat potatoes," until everybody in Lobatse knew it. It was a song used by Black people against the Boers.

When the owner came again he talked to us, but we refused to stop. "We are poor black people. We have no money to buy in your shop," we told him and continued.

We were getting mass support from the people. But you know, I think the British were trying to stop us. One day, Seepapitso, the son of Kgosi Bathoeñ, came to the shop. We said, "*Ngwana wa kgosi*, there is trouble here, you mustn't go in that shop." He said he was afraid to go inside there, so he just left and drove back to Kanye.

The next morning, his father, Bathoeñ, came. He said, "*Bananyana*, young boys, what has happened here?"

They replied, "*Ga go tsenwe*". Bathoeñ said okay, he just left. He was prepared to boycott the shop, but I think the British were telling him and his son to go and enter that shop so that the boycott will end. They thought the people will just do what the *Kgosi* does.

After Bathoeñ supported us, these Boers, they tried another plan. They said to themselves, "*Jong, dar is groet Captain hier. Groet kgosi, Seretse.*" Poor Seretse, they called him from Gammangwato to come and buy at this shop. He came from Palapye on the mail train, and then he went in the shop, buying lots of things, putting them on the counter in a way so that many people can see what he was doing. Nobody followed him, nobody! Then, that night, Seretse got on the train back to Palapye. Nobody was buying in that place.

Our poor late President, Seretse. When he came there to stop the boycott, we were shocked. He thought, "I am Seretse, the son of Chief Khama. When I get in the shop everybody will respect me." He thought he had a diamond voice. But the people, they refused to follow him. So he went back to Gammangwato the same day he came to Lobatse. He had done nothing. Bathoeñ, he also came to Lobatse to try and stop the boycott, but he never tried to go against the people.

You know, even though Seretse was helping the whites some of them still hated him. I remember some years later there was one Boer, living on a farm by Francistown, who was insulting Seretse, saying that they didn't recognise a black *kaffir* in Francistown. He said he had black dog, which was the brother of Seretse. Allison, a DC, held a meeting, trying to solve the problems between Africans and Europeans in Bechuanaland.[93] I went there to listen. All the Boers were there. They said, "We have nothing to do with the *kaffirs*. When we talk about the *kaffir* you guys always cry, but when you talk of the *Maburu* we never cry."

You know how this boycott ended? There was one white policeman in Lobatse, a Captain Monquair, and we told him that we didn't want to see this Boer here in Bechuanaland anymore. So Monquair took the fellow out to the border gate, and threw

him outside like a bucket of dirty water. He sacked that Boer for us! I don't know where he went, that Boer, somewhere by Zeerust I think. I don't know if he is still alive, but that potato song took him out of this country.

Now that was not the only time we the BPP were boycotting shops. People in other towns knew there was a boycott in Lobatse, and they began to copy what we did. The boycott was not started by us, but by the Boers, because they didn't understand the question of an African somebody querying them. In Francistown, there were plenty of shops owned by white men and this is where the next fight occurred.

In those days when you went in a shop the Europeans were sitting at the back, with a big counter between them and the customers. If you wanted to buy something, you had to talk to one African, then another one, and another one, and then finally you could buy it from the European. One African chap, after our boycott in Lobatse, came to the European, and said, "Look chaps, why am I having to go around and around. I am in a hurry."

The European owner said, "You are too silly. You don't respect the whites. You people are *kaffirs* and are pinching things here."

So they started another boycott in Francistown. People were complaining about being called thieves, but the Boers said, "You cannot do anything about it." Ordinary people knew what we had done in Lobatse, so they started to stop people going into certain shops.

Matante the scorpion, he was a rascal. He was already eating the money of the BPP.[94] When these problems were happening with the shop owners he didn't want to know what was going on. Then the people decided on their own to boycott, and ordered a lawyer from Johannesburg. I helped them, and we went to court, in Francistown. The lawyer was a Swazi chap, Lokela, who had trained before under Mandela and Tambo.

One morning, Lokela and two other guys came in a car and picked me up in Lobatse. Two others were George Kgakge, a Motswana working in South Africa, and Macheng, the brother-in-law of Motsamai Mpho. We picked up Mpho in Palapye and went to Francistown.

Our case was against Levitt Bros.[95] our lawyer asked them questions, giving these Boers hell. He asked them if they had consulted the people about reopening their shops. They said no. Then Lokela told them, "You treat these people badly. You say that they are thieves. You are referring to everybody here in Francistown. Why did you do that? You just met these people in the shop when they were buying things from you. You just insulted these people, these Batswana."

We, the boycotters, then won our case. We came out of court laughing, laughing. Jimmy Haskins and others, these white shop owners, they were a group oppressing the people. I don't know how the BDP could make Haskins an MP.

You know what these Boers did after the case? They made a phone call to the Zeerust police, and said, "Look, there's a *kaffir* here who's spoiling our case. When he arrives there you must hit him like anything."

When Lokela dropped me in Lobatse and crossed over, the police detained him in Zeerust, on the way back to Johannesburg. They kept him for one day and really beat him up.

The BPP was gaining the support of the people, but we never succeeded. It was this guy Matante, this *tsotsi*, this thug, who destroyed us all. Let me tell you how it happened. One time we agreed to send Matante to Ghana, with Mpho and Tlale, who was also on the National Committee. Nkrumah said he was going to give us certain money. He sent three tickets, and so we elected these three to go together. They were then keeping the tickets themselves. Tlale was supposed to go from Mahalapye, meet Mpho in Palapye, and then find Matante in Francistown. But when these two chaps got to Francistown they found that Matante had already gone!

Matante went by himself to Ghana, and he got the money from Nkrumah.[96] From Ghana he went straight to Germiston to buy three Land Rovers, but he only came with two at the beginning. He just came from Germiston with them through Lobatse and passed straight to Francistown. He didn't even pass through the President, Motsete, or the Secretary, Mpho, on the way, to tell them about his trip and what he had done with the party's money. When Matante came, Mpho and Tlale were still in Bulawayo, on the way to Ghana. Motshidisi phoned to Bulawayo, calling Mpho and Tlale before they left, and told them the Land Rovers had come with Matante. So Mpho and Tlale returned without even going to Ghana. On that day I was working for Mr. Lester, in Gaborone, and when I got to Lobatse, people asked me what happened.

I didn't know anything, because I thought Matante was with Mpho and Tlale. People told me "Matante is no good. We mustn't give him any chance to be a leader." By that time it was already getting late. Another problem was that our leadership was weak. The old man, Motsete, he was not political-minded—he was just a professor. Professor Motsete was useless, he was just an educated somebody who didn't know what to do. This old man, Motsete, he could not get an explanation from Matante. When Motsete took his Land Rover and a little bit of money from Matante he was happy. But he never got an answer from Matante. Motsete was just doing what

Matante wanted, saying to me, "Keitseng, you're just a communist." Mpho was doing nothing. You know Matante and his people were scared of me, not Mpho.

Those Land Rovers were a headache. Matante kept one, another he gave to Motsete, and then when he brought the third one, he gave it to Mpho. He never consulted the committee about these vehicles. After that he never gave any receipts to the party treasurer.

From the time that Matante came with those cars, we just spent all our time quarrelling. We people in the National Executive were calling for Matante to give us his report. We had a meeting in Palapye and many of us went there by train. Matante refused to go there and give us his report. Then we had another meeting at Shoshong, and Mpho took us there in his Land Rover called "Kgaoloditshane".[97] Again, Matante was not there, so we talked alone without him until we dispersed.

After that there was a meeting at Serowe, and I took about three men from Lobatse, sleeping at Mpho's place.[98] We arrived and found that Matante was addressing the meeting alone. Nobody else was saying anything, and he was talking a lot that day. He was a very powerful speaker at that time, and he was really shouting. I remember at that meeting, these Bangwato were giving us hell. Lenyeletse Seretse, the cousin of Seretse, was so drunk and really making noise: "Where did your grandfathers rule anybody in this country?"

We said, "No, we didn't rule. What we want is to put things straight. The new system is coming, and the past has gone."

He was so drunk: "You people are no good. Did your grandfather rule this country? Then how can you rule this country? How can you come here? Rascals." Those Bangwato were making a lot of noise.

At about five o'clock, we left for Palapye, and Matante didn't come. We asked for a meeting so he could report why he left the others and came with the Land Rovers alone, and why he did not report to his superiors. He told us, "I haven't got time. I'll follow you guys and see you in the morning in Palapye." We slept there at Mpho's place, and the next morning Matante was not there. When he did not come, then we went walking around, and somebody told us that Matante had already passed to Francistown the night before.

After that we were angry. Some people were wanting to go and take Matante's car by force. They wanted to throw him out of the party. They said, "We were supposed to have sacked this chap long ago. Why did we keep him here? We mustn't give Matante a chance to explain anything." I said, "No. We are followers and not the leaders. We must get together to discuss these things. If we act without consulting our

leaders we will just become like hobos, being useless. We don't want to fight like donkeys on the street. Mpho, the Secretary, and Motsete, the President, can go there foran explanation."

But I was not giving good strategy. After that Matante never gave a report. He died without giving us a report. Mpho sent the old man Motsete to talk to him at Francistown, but nothing happened.

When I came back to Lobatse that day, and people were shouting at me in the train. They said the Executive was causing this nonsense, because we allowed this chap to become vice-president.

Then we started the case, about the three Land Rovers. We asked Matante to meet us at Mahalapye. The National Executive Committee went there, to the school, and Matante came with a bunch of Kalangas from Francistown. We said no, they can't enter, because they were not on the Executive. Then Matante refused to enter the meeting. He said, "You Mpho, you are a sell-out." We were surprised, and then he left and the meeting never started.

After that we lacked unity. But we did not just split up immediately. Our leaders were going on trips to places like Ghana and Tanzania. It was Matante, Motsete, Mr and Mrs. Mpho, Motshidisi and others from the Executive. Myself, I was organising the boycott in Francistown and helping the boys pass through. One day, after Matante and Mpho and Motshidisi went to Ghana, I heard that Matante was in Francistown. Then we went and had a meeting in Lobatse, and Mpho came and shows me these shoes, white shoes of Ghana's people, like takkies. There were some gowns from Nkrumah, which we wanted to give to our president Motsete. Matante just grabbed them purposefully, saying these robes were for him. According to us, they were not.

Afterwards, Matante decided to sack me and the party just broke up. We didn't just have a meeting and let the party break up. I'm telling you what, Matante came from Francistown and we were just fighting him for a long time. When he sacked me and the Lobatse branch, then he got rid of Mpho. But it is a long story man.

We started having troubles in Lobatse. One of the branch committee members with me then was Brown Mmelesi. When I was working in Gaborone, he was acting as chairman of Lobatse branch. When I was out, he was speaking about me very badly. You see, Mmelesi was now with Matante. When one chap died in Mochudi, Mmelesi came to ask for a Land Rover to go to the funeral. We said we must ask Motsete, the leader. Then Mmelesi came again when I was out and took the Land Rover with his friends. But they never went to the funeral. They went to drink a beer in another location. After that they just got drunk and began fighting. The son of Motsete hit this

Bechuanaland. I'm going to get you one by one, just like Hitler did it." Then those guys in the Land Rover asked him, "Shall we take him?"

I picked up a stone, and said, "Fock, you can go to the moon. I'm going to hit you with these stones."

"Okay, leave that chap here."

They then went to a bar. There were a lot of girls there, drinking with Matante and those boys. Sebolao was just tied up in the car with rope. Another chap, a refugee from the Free State who was teaching at the TTC, came by in his car and heard Sebolao making noise in the Land Rover. This chap took off the rope and drove him to Peleng. Then he returned to where Matante was drinking and stayed there, just taking some booze with those guys who were boasting about how they were going to get rid of all the communists like Hitler did. So when Matante left the place, he found Sebolao was gone, but he didn't know where. By then he was at my place. So Matante ran to Francistown very quickly that day.

In the morning when I went out to investigate Matante was already gone. I found out that before he left he had also threatened James Molale, an ANC chap working with me as Lobatse BPP Treasurer. They had grabbed him after he got off work at Public Works Department. They tied him up and told him they were going to cut off his balls, because the people of southern Bechuanaland were full of nonsense. A leader, talking like this! But he didn't castrate Molale. He left him to go chase after girls.

Then the next day, Matante came south again, because he heard that Mlonyeni was back in Lobatse. The people, they were so angry, they didn't want to see him. Ordinary young fellows told him to leave. Soon afterwards Motsete came and said he wanted to take my BPP membership—also the membership of Molale and Moses Monakwe, our secretary. I told Motsete, "*Voetsak*! How can you take the property of the members of the party without consulting them?" But I was now suspended. Motsete said I mustn't work with the ANC. Motsete was a professor, a useless guy. Well, he was the one who made the national anthem, which people can sing, "*Fatshe Leno La Rona*." He knew that song, but otherwise he was just useless, just doing what Matante told him. Later, after Mandela got arrested he said to me, "Mandela has been arrested. You remain. Who was it who got Mandela arrested?" He was saying that I was the person who betrayed Mandela to the police at the same time he was helping Matante harass refugees. I am sure he was a sell-out. He was a professor, but he was a very dull professor. *Fatshe Leno La Rona*, that's all he left.

When I was sacked by Motsete, I phoned Mpho, and he came down to Lobatse, and he stayed at my house for a few days. By this time the police were starting to come

and talk to us and watch us all the time. I'm sure Matante had already gone to the District Commissioner, telling him lies about us.

Then the next day the BPP members all started to come to Lobatse for the meeting. On that first day we were going to Kanye to hold our first meeting in that place. We were fighting with Matante, but I went to Kanye to organise the meeting with a guy called Mokatenyane and some others in a Land Rover, and Mpho was coming later. I was sacked, but I wasn't giving up.

Mokatenyane and I went to the kgotla. We found Mma Seepapitso, Kgosi Bathoeñ's wife, there. We say, "*Kgosi e kae, mma*?" We were coming to greet the chief. We had written a letter to him, telling him we are coming, but he didn't give us reply. Bathoeñ was so scared of us, because he respected the British government too much.

"I don't know where's he. He's just disappeared, I don't know where is he," she told us. Even Bathoeñ's brother, his deputy, was not there. All of the Bangwaketse leaders, they were not there. They were scared because we were so-called bloody communists. They sent us to another old man there.

We said, "*Rra*, we are coming to tell you that we have come from Lobatse to hold a meeting."

"Why have you come to hold a meeting? The chief is not here."

"We don't need the *Kgosi*. We wrote a letter and we got permission." We lied, saying we had permission, but Bathoeñ had never said no. Bathoeñ was so scared that day, and he was just hiding somewhere. He forgot that he helped us in Lobatse during the boycott. Now when we arrived in Kanye, he tried to stop us. We decided to hold the meeting anyway.

After some time our people came—Mpho, Matante, and Motsete were all there. We all hated each other, but we pretended we were together. We opened the meeting at the *kgotla*. We saw Mookami, the brother of Bathoeñ there, sitting facing the other direction, and we continued. We told people why we were having the meetings, why we were suffering, why we wanted to stop the suffering of black people in Africa, why in South Africa they deported us.

Later on we saw Bathoeñ arriving, driving his green Pontiac—a powerful car. He passed quietly, because he didn't want to see us. Then, we saw police coming, from Zeerust. Those policemen didn't say anything to us, and we don't know who invited the South African Police to come this side.

That was the first time we held a meeting at Kanye, but it was very bad after the police came and surrounded us. We continued to say what we were saying, but the people there were calling us *tsotsis*, because of the effect of the Tswana chiefs in South

Africa, the stooges of the Boers. These chiefs told the Batswana that we were coming there to fight, as the ANC did one time in Lefurutshe. Now these Batswana in Kanye thought we were the same like these guys in Lefurutshe that were fighting against the government.

When the meeting ended and we went in our Land Rovers to Lobatse, the South Africans followed us, and then went back to Zeerust. I don't know whether Chief Bathoen was thinking we were coming to kill him, and he wanted protection. I think he invited them, because nobody can just invite the police in from South Africa. He didn't know that we were used to the policemen in Johannesburg.

When we got back from Kanye the trouble started again. Matante's people began shouting in the street. It was war. Later I returned home and I found a group of Matante's people at my place. They were throwing stones and bricks on top of my house. "Get out, communists!" they were shouting. "All you people coming from South Africa are communists."

It was about fifteen young guys. Then they went to the hall to sleep, and were singing all night about these things, insulting me, Mlonyeni, and other ANC guys. "You've been with the ANC, you'll always be communists."[100] I went down to the hall to find them, because people could not sleep. I asked where their leaders were, but they said Matante and Motsete were sleeping somewhere else. They had taken girls and gone with them somewhere. Maybe all four of them slept together, loving each other on the same bed.

That's why Motsete and Matante, tried to take the car from us by force, the next day. Matante, he went to the BMC to collect some Makalakas—they wanted to grab Mpho's car by force. After we went home from that meeting, Mpho's driver, Patrick Tshane, took that vehicle. When he was in town, those Makalakas found him at the station, and they called Matante. They told Tshane they wanted to take the car for Matante. It was war. Then they started fighting.

One chap called Speaker Difatlho came to my house to tell me they were fighting. I felt very bad. We were supposed to be fighting for freedom, but now we were fighting each other in the streets. Mpho, myself, and others went to town in a small Land Rover.

By this time Matante had taken a big rock and tied Tshane to it. He told us, "I want this car. I want this car. I don't want anybody to travel with these cars here. First I gave this car to Mpho to use, but now he's being the boss, driving my car. So I'm taking it back."

Matante also had a chain and was trying to pull our Land Rover by force. He tied the chain in the wrong place, connecting it to the petrol tank. All the petrol fell on the ground, almost burning the whole car.

Me and Mpho, then walked to find the police, but one policeman, Mokgweetsi, came to us, and told us Motsete wants to see me and Mpho at his house. The police then guided us to where we were going. Motsete was there, and Matante also came.

Mpho says, "Look old man, we know we trust you as our President, so before you can accuse me of anything you must first let me say what happened."

Motsete refused. Matante said, "Yes, you mustn't waste our time. We are going to get rid of all these guys who are no good. Communists!"

Motsete, that guy was useless. He said, "You Mpho, you are sacked from the party. From today I am sacking you from the party."

Mpho says, "You are going to sack me? What have I done?"

"We can see that you people in the ANC are no good." Then Motsete and Matante took all the cars from us, by force. There were all these BPP members who had come from Palapye and Mahalapye, now they were stranded. I asked Matante how they can go back.

He said, "Okay, I'll see. I'll see later on." He liked to talk with a deep voice, that guy. At quarter to eleven, just as the train is coming, I took those guys to walk to the station to go north. The next day, after we got to Palapye by train, Mpho went to get a car. They took all the machinery of the party, and they brought it to me. Everything, even the ANC and the trade union papers, they brought it to me. Then I said that I had no space, because my house was small. I said they must take it to Mpho, because he was secretary.

You know Matante took all the Land Rovers, but one car managed to get to Palapye, to Mpho. I don't know who was driving that car. Matante and some of his chaps tried to take it by force from Mpho's house, and also all the party papers. It was war again. Nine boys from Johannesburg were there. They stayed at Mpho's place and didn't allow Matante's people to take the stuff. When they came they said, "You guys, we are going to hit you." Then Matante ran away with his group, because they thought maybe these guys from South Africa were *tsotsis*.

While we were still in Palapye we met as the Executive Committee of the party. All of us were there except Matante and Motsete. There were six of us. Besides me and Mpho there was Motshidisi, Lesetedi, Tlale and Mphe, who joined us later. We decided to fight the sell-outs for control of the BPP. Then, after that we made a case, trying to get the money which Matante had taken from the party and also the Land Rovers.

Nkrumah wanted to help us, but the Bechuanaland government refused to intervene. They said it was our own problems, not theirs. I think they were afraid of Nkrumah at that time.

After that the BPP was broken. This information I have is important, because some people they think that Matante was a strong politician. But we the people knew him. We know what type of man he was. I think that's enough about Matante. He's dead now, but maybe people will know him better if they read what I have said about him."

Following this set of incidents the BPP split, and Matante continued to lead the BPP, purging Motsete from the party in 1963, while Mpho's section of the party hived off to form what became known as the Botswana Independence Party (BIP).

"After the BPP split I remained with Mpho for a while. Things between us were not very good, though. After that Mpho did not want to work with me properly. You know I was expelled from the BPP before him, and Mpho was a little bit scared of me. In 1963, I was supposed to go on a trip to Moscow and he never gave me any money for my trip.[101] When I came back from Moscow in 1963, Mpho didn't want to ask me anything—he didn't need my report.

I was quite disappointed about these things. I knew this chap when we were with the ANC in Johannesburg. He was staying far from me, in Randfontein, but he came to many meetings. He was arrested with us and during the Treason Trial he married in jail. Later he was deported after me. I think he lost confidence in the ANC after a while. There was one day when Mpho was arrested, in Alexandra. At that time I was still facing charges in the Treason Trial, but Mpho was already released. When Mpho got out of the police station, he went to the ANC office, and I heard him quarrelling with this secretary there. The secretary said they didn't go and check Mpho at the police station and get him bail because they didn't get proper information.

Mpho was angry, saying "Okay, you can continue to fail to receive proper information."

After 1962 he no longer liked me for different reasons. He was scared of the ANC, because he was no longer active. Also, he knew I was involved with the unions and the workers. But Mpho didn't like the workers. Even when he was in Johannesburg before the Treason Trial, he was against the workers. He was not mixing with the working people. He liked the educated people, and he was working as a clerk for a white man, a *Moruti*. That *Moruti's* church built Mpho's house in Palapye after he was deported.

But I was working for the BIP until the first election, in 1965. In those days tribalism was very strong. Even when I was in BPP these guys from the north were querying whether people from the South could have positions in the party. Just when we were

coming to general election, after we were sacked, me, Tladi, Rasetswana, one woman Meisie, and others, nine of us—we tried to organise for BIP using bicycles. We went to hold meetings in Kanye, Moshupa, Thamaga, Ramotswa, and Molepolole. My bicycle belonged to Joe Modise. I went to all these southern villages by bicycle, alone. That's why we lost, because Matante had all the Land Rovers, but the BIP had very lousy transport.

One time we went to Serowe on the train for a meeting, but we needed a lift afterwards. Then Seretse Khama came along with two Chevrolets, which the BDP got with money from Israel. We said, "Where are you going, *Kgosi*?"

He asked if he can give us a lift, so we got in and went to Palapye. When we got off at Palapye, he said, "If I lose the election to you chaps, I'll just use the power of chieftainship. I won't wait for you."

We said, "Okay, we know you're a chief."

When the election came we didn't even win one seat. The BPP and Matante got three, and *Domkrag* (BDP) got twenty-nine. Just the day after the election, we came to a garage in Gaborone, and found this chap Nwako [102] there, one of Seretse's guys. He said "You chaps, why do you lose everything? You lose, and will continue to lose."

We didn't speak, because we were hopeless on that day. *Domkrag* was sweeping us man, because they just had Seretse. Everybody knew that Seretse was a chief, and everybody knew that they were going to get a position from the chief, so they were all on his side.

I was sacked by Mpho as a member of BIP soon after that election. I received a letter from him, sacking me from BIP. I said, "Thank you very much," because I work for the ANC and I will forever. Before the BNF our politics in Bechuanaland was messed up because we were never properly organised. That's why the BPP was broken by *tsotsis* and sell-outs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Representing the Workers of Bechuanaland, 1962-5

In addition to being involved in BPP/BIP activities, Keitseng also became an organiser in the fledgling union movement in Botswana. Workers were not particularly numerous in the Protectorate, given that the country was overwhelmingly rural. Still, the movement reached its zenith between 1962 and 1966 during the era of the Bechuanaland Trades Union Congress (BTUC)—an amalgamation of some smaller groups which was led by ANC and BPP member Klaas Motshidisi of Palapye.

As part of the union movement, Keitseng was able to undertake the longest trip of his life, journeying to Moscow in late 1963 for a Soviet-sponsored workers' conference, an event he remembers very well. Such participation underscores Keitseng's view that nationalism and trade unionism are practically synonymous. Like the BPP, though, the union movement declined after the first election, in 1965, because the BDP-led government stifled union activities. Keitseng subsequently was less involved in worker activities, even though he himself became a common labourer thereafter. If Keitseng was never a central figure in Botswana's union activities, his account is nonetheless the only published first-hand one of this movement.

"When I came back to Lobatse, I worked for Lester Bros. But I wasn't working with them all the time, because I had many other jobs. When I was working, I also was helping to organise the workers, because I was a man of the unions.

But I don't want to say that I just hated my employers. When I was working with Lester Bros I became the foreman. The son of Lester didn't want to part with me, and he liked me to go with him all the time to many places. He was a Scotchman.

One day, the old man Lester said to me, "Fish, you are going to Johannesburg with me and my son." He didn't know that I was deported, and I didn't want to tell him. I just got in the truck, and went with them to Klerksdorp. I just kept quiet, and we came back with no problem.

I worked with them until the contract with the government was over, and then I left them. Later on, when the ANC was not so active, I worked with them again.

When I came back to Bechuanaland there were no true unions here. Lenyeletse Seretse was claiming to be the leader of Bechuanaland Protectorate Workers Union, but he was not a unionist. He was just blunting the workers. So we formed a new union called BTUC. Victor Busang was chairing and Klaas Motshidisi was the Secretary. He was asking for my advice after I arrived here. He said, "You have an idea of trade unions. You should address the meetings for us." When the BTUC started, I was holding meetings for them, organising workers in Lobatse. Going to the farms, we said,

"Chaps you are working for nothing? Why you don't want to join a trade union?" Then they joined. Continuously we went to the farms like that, organising.

One day the BTUC had a big meeting, and I went there with fourteen of our guys, as we were prepared to defend ourselves. Some of them were working in shops, some of them in the farms. We went to a place we called "*Thaba Ya Badiri*," or "The Hill of the Workers." Motshidisi came from Palapye to speak to us, but one policeman was there, a European, a young fellow. I think he thought that he could threaten us, because he gave us a microphone to speak into. He thought that if he could record what we were saying we would be afraid. Then Klaas and I addressed the workers. We told them to fight for their rights and to keep organizing, or they'll die like stones, without saying anything. That day we got a lot of support from the people.

It was only us union members who were helping the workers. I remember one time involving some mineworkers and their families at Moshaneng, where they were mining manganese. Some Boers went there, collecting some people and then taking them to farms outside.[103] They were organising slavery, taking about sixty people to some farms in the Transvaal for picking maize and potatoes. We didn't know that they went to South Africa, but one day in Lobatse, we saw these people coming back on foot direct from the border. They told us that they were tricked by the Boers, who took them to farms and hid them there. They said, "Those *Maburu* were hitting us, and some people ran away. We came together as a group, trying to go to the police station to get help. We asked the driver of the farmer's truck to take us to town, saying we wanted to go to the shop, even though we had no money. But then this Boer farmer who was taking us heard about it, so he refused to let that driver take us to town. We worked for that man longer, and then one day he put us on the truck and took us straight to the border. When each of us got off the truck, these Boers gave us a hard clap. Each and every one of us was hit."

These people did not get paid, because the farmer deported them without giving them anything. The Boers thought they were too clever.

So we took them to the location in Lobatse, asking people if they have *phaleche* and food for these people. We used a small hall for them to sleep. Early in the morning we sent a message to Bathoen, because these were his people. He had a bus, but he refused to send it to come and pick them up. So we went to the District Commissioner, but he had only a small vehicle, and he sent it to take those who were sick. But the rest of them had to walk to Kanye. Bathoeñ, he was the father of those kids, but he did nothing. When the child is crying, the father is supposed to go outside and see what is eating his kid, isn't that true? But he didn't do it.

What I learned in the unions is that the workers can only rely on themselves. So I told these chaps they didn't have to walk to Kanye. I went with them to the abattoir, where the BMC workers were lodging. These BMC guys took them in a truck to Kanye, and I followed on bicycle. Then the workers left them at Molapowabojang.

At that place we interviewed these people. One BTUC guy was writing notes, and I was just giving instructions as I can't write properly.

We used that information to write a letter to Chief Bathoeñ and to the police in Mafikeng, saying what had happened. Chief Bathoeñ at that time was a little bit scared, and only later he became a man. But he agreed to help his people.

He said, "Well, you people, you can get in the train, I will pay all your fares. You must go to the authorities in Mafikeng where you can collect your wages." Then they went and they picked up their money, but I don't know how it went as I wasn't there.

In those days many people called me a "communist". If you fought for your rights, you just became a "communist." They said I was a communist, Motshidisi was a communist, Mpho was a communist, but they never said Matante was communist because they knew he was a sell-out.

Even Seretse Khama, I remember long before he was President, when he came back from London and became the Secretary of the Legislative Assembly. Seretse was being directed by the British government. He was in their hands and they were just controlling him, steering him like a person steers a car. The first time Seretse came from England he fought with his uncle, Tshekedi, and then the British took him back to England for five years before he came back again. We in Bechuanaland didn't know that for five years they were going to train him that side. He became an Englishman. Seretse he never saw me, but he came to this country knowing that I am a "communist" because his masters told him that.

But even if they said I love communism, I don't know anything about it. We used to be told that Ma-Communist were the devils. But many of our great leaders in the struggle were communists, guys like J.B. Marks, Mosese Kotane, and Dan Tloome. Even the Europeans in the ANC were mostly communists, like the Hodgsons, Joe Slovo, and Abram Fischer.

I did not see any devils in Russia when I went there in 1963 on behalf of the workers. I was a member of the BTUC Executive, and in 1963 they selected me to go to Russia for a conference which ninety countries were attending. It was to build world trade union unity. These Russians sent us some tickets to go there.

I said, "But I can't go, I don't know Russia." But the Executive decided to send me. They said, "You are more clever than us." You see at that meeting, three guys, Tshepe,

Patrick Tshane, and Emmanuel Mokobi were selected for military training in China. So I was sent to go to Russia, alone.

I took £25 of money with me, but it was ANC money. At that time I kept all the money. I was not stealing from my party, but I had no money. Mpho was supposed to give me money, but he didn't. I found Tshane, Tshepe, and Motsepe, who were going to China and we went by train together to Rhodesia. It was the first time I went back after I was arrested in Rhodesia with Mbeki and others. In Bulawayo the Rhodesian Special Branch found me getting off the train. They said, "Fish, if you are a man, come to my office."

We went with him. My old friend Gilbert was there. "Fish, you are here again."

"No, I am in transit. I am not coming to your country. Why are you wasting my time? I am going far. There is no plane in Botswana going north. Only in Rhodesia. Tomorrow I'm catching the plane."

He continued to want to see my papers, like my BPP membership. He took my Trade Union papers. I told him that it's none of his business.

"Where are you going to sleep?"

One friend of mine from Molepolole, who was teaching in Rhodesia, was with us. We met him on the train. He said we were staying with him, in Mpopoma location.

"Have you got transport to where you're getting to?"

I said no, I'll get there with my guys. I was wondering why, if I was in transit, they wanted to give me a lift? Maybe they wanted to take me back to prison? So we went to this guy's house without any lift from the police. The next morning we went into Bulawayo, and caught a plane to Salisbury, four of us. We thought we would get a plane from there to Cairo.

When we came to the check-in at the Salisbury airport with our parcels, they said to me that I was not going anywhere. The other three chaps got on the plane.

I was in a bad situation. Mpho, he had never given me any money. Fortunately I had that ANC money, but I was using it before, buying people food on the train. I asked if there was any hotel nearby, and I went there. Coloured guys were drinking and singing all night. In the morning I went to the British High Commissioner, and told him I was stuck there and not allowed to be there. I asked for a visa to go north. I waited there the whole day, and then in the afternoon the British told me that Mafikeng was refusing to give me the documents. I said, "Fock, I am going! I don't care."

I said I was going to get on the plane, because I had a ticket, which came from Nkrumah. I went to the airport and got on the plane. People from the airline were telling me that I couldn't go, and that I would have to get off.

But in those days I was sharp, very, very sharp. I was fat, I was very brave, and I was so stubborn. You know, I just forced myself into that plane. A freedom fighter cannot just ask the oppressors for permission to do something. I just went past the immigration and got on that plane, passing by all these white ladies with their hats on. I was refusing to listen to them, and they couldn't stop me. When the oppressors find that they are meeting with black people who don't just say, "*Yes baas*," they can get confused.

Fortunately, when I took a seat, there was one European chap sitting next to me who helped me. He asked me where I was going. I told him Europe, because I didn't want to talk about Russia—nobody wanted to hear that. He told me that he was coming from South Africa, from the case of Mandela and others, as some British lawyers had gone to observe that case. I relaxed because I knew this chap can help me defend my rights, and I told him what had happened to me in Rhodesia. He said, "I'll see what's going to happen. When we get to Cairo, I'll check and see you go through."

In Cairo, he worked with me, though he was going through Rome. These British guys stopped me again in Cairo. That European lawyer talked to them and they told me I could go. Then when he went to Rome they just refused again to let me go to Russia.

But God, he can be with you! After they refused I got a telegram from the Soviet Union, saying that they even had all my documents there, even a picture! Then the people at Cairo said that I was well known in Russia and I could go there. In the afternoon I got in the plane and we flew straight to Moscow.

When we were arriving, we saw these big rivers from the plane. There were big rivers, with a lot of water. We landed, and I tried to get out before all the rest of the people. I was shocked. It was killing, man! It was so cold. I ran back again in the plane, until I was the last person there. I was from Bechuanaland, man, and I had no clothes and no jacket. That cold was unbelievable. When I came out I saw three gentlemen with the Russian hats, standing there with my picture.

I was the first one arriving in Russia for the conference. One of these Russian guys looked after me, and every one of the people attending the conference had his own person helping him. They were looking after us very nicely. My chap took me in the lift up to my room in the hotel, on the seventh floor. Every person attending stayed at that hotel. I was staying in a big room, I asked myself why they were putting me in that room. It was called the Moscova Hotel. It was the most wonderful hotel I had seen, a big and lovely place. They showed me everything, a television, and other things. That was my first time to see television. When my friend left I was watching television, and what happened was that I saw one big Russian with a *sjambok*, chasing another guy who

was trying to get involved with a girl, kicking and hitting him in the yard. I was just alone there, and I started laughing. I thought I was with the people there in that television programme and they were talking to me. I was also trying to talk with them.

Later on the friend phoned me and told me to come down to the bottom floor. The passages of the hotel were very big, with red carpets. We went to where the people were eating. Lots of people. When the conference started every country had its food and its flag. There was even a flag for BPP, even though I was sacked. I was eating some funny things that side. It was the first time I see this kind of red fish which you don't cook, you just eat it straight. I didn't eat it again because I didn't like it. I was eating and eating many other good kinds of food there. After dinner my helper took me to sleep in my big room.

That night I said to myself, "Where am I, why am I so free?" People kept saying in South Africa that Russians were eating their own people and killing themselves, but I could see that it was a very nice country.

In the morning my friend phoned for me, saying that after breakfast we were going to see Russia. When we left the hotel he said, "Now you must decide what you want to see." We first went somewhere to see a church. He told me, "You people, you are told we have no church, but here is a church. Just look. You see these people, their relative has died and they are going to be bury him now. If you want to stay until these people are buried, you can remain."

I said, "No, I don't want to be bored watching dead people. I want to see Russia." So we left those guys praying for those who passed away. We went everywhere, we even saw where they were putting Lenin. I spent about seven or eight days there in Russia, like this. I was relaxed there man. You know I couldn't understand this question of "communists" and everybody being scared of them. When I was in Russia, I didn't see anybody walking in the streets saying, "These people are communists!"

When I was in Russia I was not alone. My old comrade Joe Matlou was living there. I even saw Kenneth Koma[104] there. It was the first time I met him. Before that I only knew his name. There were also three other Batswana there doing some studies, who were in BPP and the union. They were in Moscow learning how to organise the workers.[105] Koma left a message for me at the Moscova Hotel, and he collected me one time and took me to his place. He said, "I understand that you are fighting for the party. Why don't you guys in the BPP come together? To be split in pieces is nothing."

I said I didn't know, "I'm not a leader, I don't know what they are fighting about."

I stayed with him for a couple of days after the conference meetings were finished. We were discussing Bechuanaland politics and the problems between Matante, Motsete,

Mpho, and others. I told Koma everything that I knew. We were agreeing that disunity was killing the politics of the ordinary people. Then we discussed for the first time the building of a United Front. Koma was wanting to make an alliance between all the BPP guys and the unions to oppose the BDP. He gave me some letters to give to Matante, Motsete, and Mpho. He was trying to get them to build this United Front. But it never worked. These party leaders continued to act for themselves, instead of the workers. This is why they lost.

After eight days the conference was finished. They took us to another part of Russia. It was very far from Moscow, and we went by plane. You know, the way people were vomiting in the plane, it was going up and down. Going down, then up! We were holding on our seats. I was lost, because I didn't know if that country we were going to was this side or what.

I think these Russians were trying to show us that they were not imperialists, that they can treat people who are not white very well. I think this place was called Tajikistan, near India. Those guys there were short, all short. Those people there, it was the first time they saw the people like us, coming from Africa. They used to come and look at us and touch us, rubbing us all over. The language was a little bit tough, but every section had its own interpreter.

We spent about three days there, and on the last day I was really becoming drunk. In South Africa I used to take one or two cans of beer. But on that day all of us were drinking some vodka with those short guys. That stuff was too powerful, and when I stood up I was just going round and round. It just looked like I would fall down. But I was a little bit better than others, because people were really drinking that time. After that, I haven't liked to drink anything, even to this day.

We then returned to Russia again. I wanted to take a plane through London so I could see that place. But when I got back to Moscow my plane for England had left, so I had to go back to Bechuanaland the same way.

I left with many other African delegates, but when we got to Cairo, there was no plane there. We had to wait for five days. But I used to walk, walk, walk all over Cairo, alone. There was no Motswana there except me so I was just enjoying going all over on foot. I didn't like staying with these other African guys because these people were looking for women like anything. Even in Russia they were asking why they weren't being given a girl to sleep with. Then they were told, "Look, you're coming to attend a meeting, not to see girls. You can see the girls on your own time, today we are holding our meeting."

But I was staying in a hotel with these chaps in Cairo. One day they said we must go up somewhere to sleep with prostitutes.

I said, "I don't want to go there."

They told me, "When you get there you'll see lots of beautiful ladies. Then you'll get one."

I said, "Fock man, I don't need these things. I'm not involved in this lots of love. I don't know what type of people these ladies are, so why should I sleep with them?" *Yassus*, these Africans up north, they like ladies man.

Planes were very, very scarce, so we stayed there five days. When I finally reached Salisbury, I was a bit afraid, because Koma gave me a big pile of books to take for him, communist books. He said when I pass customs I must open my bag and show them. "If they see it they are not worried. They don't like books if they are covered and hidden." So I did that, and there was no problem.

I was the only African on the plane, and the first person to get off.

The immigration didn't look at those books but they said, "We told you not to leave here, and now you coming back. Wait." They dealt with all the whites, and then they came back to talk to me. I told them I reached Russia.

"Why didn't you tell us you were going to Russia?"

"Why should I tell you? That is my own business."

"We're going to show you. This afternoon you must go."

"How must I go?"

"You can fly or you can go down underground." Then they kept questioning me, because they knew my plane to Bulawayo was going. Then they let me out after it left.

So I went and found the General Manager of the airport. I told him that these chaps kept me until my plane had left. Where was I going to sleep? He gave me tickets and some money to buy food at the hotel. I slept there, and in the morning I got another plane. When I got to Bulawayo the police took me to the train station and told me not to leave the platform. One chap joined me there, a white policeman, and he remained with me until Plumtree. You know I liked that because if a white man was escorting you then you could sit with the rich white people in first class. It was comfortable that side, much better than the section for the Bantu.

Then I came back to Botswana. That was the only time I have ever left Africa. I liked Russia very much, but I later saw they had some problems. When we were with them they were always speaking against imperialism, but they were also ruling over other people like the people we had visited. We had always been told that Communists were devils, but they were just like other *makgoa*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Life in Independent Botswana

After Botswana became an independent nation in 1966, Keitseng's life quietened to some extent. He retained his role as a salaried member of the ANC for some time, but the movement's reduced level of activity inside South Africa meant that he was not needed nearly as much. In addition, police surveillance in the region had become far more sophisticated and Keitseng was too well known to risk involvement in most operations. After some time the ANC's lack of resources made it recall even the vehicles that it had sent to Keitseng. Even so, he maintained his primary role as the ANC point man in Botswana until about the time of the 1976 Soweto riots, when a new influx of younger refugees entered Botswana from South Africa. Following this period, when Umkhonto became more active, Keitseng was less involved in underground activities.

As his political activities reduced, his family life, so long neglected as an activist, took increasing precedence in his life. After marrying in 1968, Keitseng eventually had 11 children, and gradually moved his family from Lobatse to the growing capital, Gaborone, where he made a living in the construction industry—partly as a wageworker and also as an independent builder.

"After independence I continued taking people by the pipeline for about four years. The police, were always following me. When I would go north they wouldn't even watch me. When I came from Kazungula they followed me. One chap, I saw him about five months ago. He said he knew me. I said, "From where do you know me?"

"I used to follow you, but I didn't allow you to see us." They weren't wearing police uniforms, those guys.

For a while I used to go to Kazungula twice a week. We used to have two cars, then one day I was told to deliver those cars to them. They said they had a lot of jobs to do in Zambia, but they were short of money. At that time, I think they were spreading our people over to Angola and they needed cars for that.

I went and took the Land Rovers to Lusaka with Mosepele. When we were coming back on the train, we got out by the Rhodesian border so that the police could check our passes. It was that chap Gilbert, who was there questioning me in jail long back. He said to me, "Fish, you know that we deported you, but you are here again." I said I was in transit. I pulled my passport from him. Then he went to my partner, "Mosepele, you are also one of the Keitsengs." Then I just pulled his passport away, and we got in the train and came home. I refused to let useless Rhodesian guys waste our time.

After that time, we did less work for the ANC. Sometimes I was accepting guys coming from the north, entering into South Africa. They used to come at night to see

me, bringing guns from that side. We used to have a place in the bush where we were keeping the guns, and I would take them there in the middle of the night. We passed Kanye to a place called Mabule, where there was a big hole we dug. When those guys came we might put guns there or dig them out with the shovels. Afterwards, ANC guys would take those guns to Johannesburg, but I don't know how they got them there. This was continuing until I became a councillor, in 1989. I was MK until 1992. How can I stop? If you are a thief, how can you stop being a thief? You get used to it. I am freedom fighter, I can continue working for the ANC until I am old.

A lot of the time after independence I was helping ANC refugees who came to live in Botswana. There were quite a lot of them, and they were not freedom fighters but just party members who came to this place. These people came with nothing sometimes, and some Batswana were not helping them very much. I was not a rich person and I wasn't with BDP, but at least I knew many ordinary people who could help their brothers and sisters coming this side. I was looking after ANC houses in Bontleng and Mogoditshane where the refugees could stay.

Like I said there was no Umkhonto in Gaborone. When guys came from the north, they didn't speak to anybody. They came at night, and maybe they jumped the fence. Sometimes guns were also being sent down, but I didn't get involved in such operations, and they only took me sometimes to Mabule. I never knew those Umkhonto guys, because they did not use their real names. Nobody made their name public at that time, and when they used to leave South Africa they would burn their passes.

It was always very dangerous. The South African police had a plane over the border. They also used to pay South African salesmen, Whites and Indians, for information. These salesmen used to come to Peleng or Naledi to sleep with African girls and to spy on us. There were spies everywhere. When the Boers came in 1985 they killed people in one of the ANC plots I was looking after, though they never came to the others. People were getting killed all over, so we always had to be careful.

I remember one chap, Kanyile, who I never knew in Johannesburg. The government deported this chap from the Transkei—Pondoland—and they took him to stay at Kuruman. He was sitting alone in the farms there, for about six years, sitting alone. Verwoerd, when he deported you, he would send you to live with people he knew you couldn't talk to. He was trying to create difficulties for blacks to communicate. I remember one guy was deported from Lefurutshe to KwaZulu. Can you imagine how miserable he was!

Kanyile, after being in Kuruman, he just slipped away and came through the border. He went to the police, and they told him to go to Lobatse, as there was someone there

helping refugees, referring to me. He came by bus, saying he wanted to go to Rhodesia.

I didn't know him. "Who are you, man?"

"I am coming from Kuruman. I was deported from Pondoland, for fighting against the government."

I asked lots of questions, to find out whether he is a sell-out. It was at this time that Seretse Khama told the police to take the ANC money in Botswana away from me. He said he didn't want me touching any of the money of the ANC. So I couldn't help Kanyile with money, but when I found he was okay, I took him to my friend in Mochudi, another one-eyed whiteman. We made a plan for Kanyile, and this *Lekgoa* bought some things for him, like a shovel and other stuff. We got a plot for him there so he could plant potatoes and cabbages and sell them. He spent about three years there. Later on, he went to Kanye, and I think he was there two years. Then he found a girl, he went to live with her at her village, Dinogeng, near Kanye. He ploughed in Dinogeng, and then he moved to Mogoditshane. He was selling lots of vegetables and cabbages there, and people knew him.

But all this time he was also working for the ANC. Kanyile got into trouble one time when guys in Lusaka sent a lot of guns in a truck into Botswana. The ANC in Lusaka didn't know at that time that there was a spy in the office, called Tennyson Makiwane. This guy called the police in South Africa, and they told the police here. That's why, when Kanyile brought the truck here the Botswana police caught him and took all these guns. They took him and hit him, hit him like anything in the head. That is why now one of his ears is not all there. He nearly died. It was the Botswana police, they forced him to tell them where he got these guns. Kanyile, after he was tortured, was taken from Lusaka to Russia for treatment by the ANC.

The following day I was taken to see the Commander of the police, this Mokwena, Simon Hirschfeldt.[106] I said to these police who came for me, "Are you going to kill me, boys?"

We went there, and Hirschfeldt, said, "Now you guys, go out and leave me with *Rre* Keitseng."

"Are you going to kill me? Why are you chasing these guys out?"

"No, I just want to talk to you. Mr. Keitseng, I need you, because I understand that you are a member of the BNF. I understand that you are trying to work with these people to destroy our party." He was referring to the BDP. He was trying to question me by making a lot of corners, and tricking me. "What is your party?"

"I am in the BNF."

"You guys, you don't like the BDP."

"Yes, that is our position. We are opposing them, and they are opposing us. What's wrong with it? Why don't you ask your party why they oppose us?"

"Where is that guy, Kanyile?"

"I understand that he has gone to Tanzania."

"So you, Mr. Keitseng, I understand that you are very cheeky."

"Cheeky? You never saw me before in this office cheeking you. What are you are talking about?"

"You are a member of the BNF."

"Yes."

"Where's Kanyile?"

"He's gone to Russia. You can't say you don't know, because you chaps hit him in Mogoditshane."

"Yes, but we don't want people coming here, without knowing them."

Then I said, "How did you not know him? He's been here for a long time. He nearly died, so why were you chaps hitting him?" Man, I was so fed up. I was challenging that policeman, until finally he said he would talk to me another time. He was thinking he could threaten me, but he found that I was prepared to answer anything.

Kanyile? One day I went to Lusaka, I found that chap was looking after the cattle there. These guys in the ANC, they had a lot of cattle at that time. Later he went home, and I hope he is living peacefully there.

After that I kept having problems with the Hirschfeldt brothers because I was BNF and ANC. I was also stubborn. One time I was taken to CID after I spoke against the Hirschfeldts in the Freedom Square, at the time people were accusing them of stealing TV sets and selling them in Zimbabwe. Whether that was true or not I did not care. I told the police I didn't care what they did to me, "Jail is my blanket, jail is my food. Don't think I am afraid of it."

Most people in Botswana were always prepared to help the refugees. It was just a few people like Matante and Rasebolai and some of the police who wanted to make life difficult for them.

I also remember another chap I helped, whose name I won't mention. His wife came to Botswana. This chap, a teacher from the Transkei, applied for a job in Serowe so he could be with her. Then he got the job, and they told him to come to Botswana.

The problem was that another chap in Special Branch there in Serowe, also from the Transkei, was in love with this man's wife. You know when a man likes your wife, he is going to really follow you up. So he turned against the husband, sending him a message, saying, "I'm going to tell the police about your activities if you come to

Bechuanaland." But my friend was not scared, and he jumped the fence into Botswana. When he came to Serowe he found that somebody had taken his position before he could get there.

Then he travelled to Mahalapye, but one European policeman found and arrested him, because he was very big, much bigger than a Motswana. He said he had jumped the fence, but that he was going back to his country. But they locked him in jail for fourteen days. They released him on bail, and he came to Lobatse, to find a friend of his teaching at the TTC in Lobatse. Later he found me, and he told me his story, because he wanted money to go back to South Africa.

I went to John Sheppard at police station, who told us to settle the case in Mahalapye. We took the train there, and just when we are getting off the same policeman who arrested my friend saw us. "Hey you. You are still here. Didn't we tell you must go home? What do you want here?"

I asked this policeman why my comrade was arrested, because he came to get a job in Serowe that was offered to him. I told him, "I saw Sheppard in Lobatse, he said I must come to see you." Sheppard was very high in Special Branch, and this other policeman said nothing.

I left my friend there, and he settled that case. When he returned to Lobatse he found a job as a school inspector in Gaborone. I'm glad to say that other policemen never stole his wife, and he worked here for a long time helping to develop this country.

Losing the way and sell-outs

In the past when certain Africans were fighting for freedom you would find those who were unreliable mixed up among them. Some people, like Muzorewa or Mobutu, were just waiting, mixing with the nationalists. Then another problem was that individuals who didn't have correct discipline just became like sheep and followed these unreliable leaders who were not working for the people. This was a problem for the ANC and also a problem here in Botswana.

For instance this chap Brown Mmelesi, who was denouncing me in Lobatse, is now a chief in the *kgotla* in Lobatse. He came to live in Lobatse from Cape Town just at that time I was deported. He told me he used to address the ANC meetings in Cape Town. Yet after some time he turned against ANC, and he joined the BPP because he was a Mongwato and so were Matante and Motsete. He was just joining by his tribal identity.

Theo Mmusi was another chap who disappointed me. This guy was another Motswana who was in Defiance Campaign and also in the Treason Trial with myself

and Mpho. I didn't know in South Africa he was just a little boy who liked to play, because when he came here he joined Matante. When he saw Matante talking a lot of nonsense, he thought he was saying something. He joined Matante, and he died in his hands.

But let me tell you about one chap who I respected, Motsamai Mpho. He really disappointed me. He was a little bit against me, because he said I was being used by the people in South Africa. We started together in South Africa, but when he came here he started to look at them with one eye, not with two eyes. We were in ANC, BPP, and BIP together, but after independence I didn't like what he was doing. One day I was in Serowe, and I met Mpho in town. This was just after Bishop Muzorewa came to Gaborone to speak to the students at the university. That guy Mobutu was also here. Mpho had been there, listening. I asked him, "I understand Muzorewa and Mobutu came to the university. How did they look?"

"Very good. These chaps are very good." I was so disappointed, because this chap Muzorewa was a sell-out. Mpho, he also thought this guy Mobutu was a good guy.

"What type of good do you mean? These guys have been unreliable since the start."

It was just at the time of the second election, and Mpho replied, "No. I think Seretse likes me more than anybody around here. He says I can take over from him."

I think Comrade Mpho can ask himself who he was favouring. Then, he can ask himself who is favouring him now. But I don't say I am perfect, because I can make a mistake like himself or anybody else. Mpho is good, but I don't know, there is something wrong with him. He talks good, but his actions, I don't always understand them. When we came back to Botswana we were walking down different paths.

Let me tell you something, these chaps like Mmelesi and Mmusi were not sell-outs, they were just losing their vision. I have seen many sell-outs, even at the beginning of the struggle when politics was just new. To be a sell-out is easy, and once they give you money, they have you.

There was one chap called Sergeant Botha who was working at the border. When these salesmen went to Botswana from South Africa to sell clothes or other things, he would give them money so they can give him information. There was one chap who was delivering *Rand Daily Mail* in Botswana who gave lots of information to Botha.

Even a lot of guys who were coming to Bechuanaland as refugees were just coming to get information to supply to the boss. Particularly the South Africans, they had a lot of spies. They used to come here, the Boers, with a lot of money. They would say to me, "Give us information."

I would say, "What kind of information?" Then they would leave. If I had agreed, I would have been shot long ago. You know I would rather die than be a spy.

There was only one time the Boers tricked me. I remember one chap, Gordon Winter, who came from Johannesburg, with one boy, and when they arrived in Botswana somebody told me they didn't go through the border, but they just dropped the boy at the fence. Then he went back to the road and went through the border at the proper gates. When he got in Lobatse, he asked for Fish, and came to see me. I didn't know that chap before, but he knew a lot of things and I became convinced he was one of our guys.

He had some tape recording too, which I didn't see, but many years later I read about myself in his book, *Inside Boss*. He also had a camera, but I didn't see it. It is terrible, somebody taking your picture while you aren't aware of it.

But the ANC had people who became traitors. One of them was Bartholomew Tlhapane, who was together with me during the Treason Trial. He started giving information to the police and became a really a high star, as I understand from inside. The police gave him cars, different cars, and he had suits, a wife, and a wonderful house. When he came home at night after selling us to the Boers he kissed mummy and he got food from her and enjoyed life.

After some time the ANC got some information that he was selling us out, and then he stopped appearing in Botswana. When the ANC got information on him, they knew what to do with him. One day he went home in the evening with another ANC comrade. Thlapane washed, changed his clothes, and was just starting to eat his mummy's food on a seat. Just when he was trying to kiss mummy, this other chap gave him a bullet in the head. He died at once. No traitor needs more than one bullet.

Another very famous sell-out I knew was Tennyson Makiwane. The first time I really talked to him was when I came from Russia. After leaving Cairo on my way back from Russia I dropped at Tanzania, and a group of people including Tambo and J.B. Marks took me from the hotel to a house they had. They asked me why I went to Russia without informing them.

I said, "You know I am also in the trade unions. We formed a union in Bechuanaland, now I was going out through them." After that I went to the office to greet Tennyson Makiwane, because he was an important so-and-so there. He also asked me why I went out of Bechuanaland without informing him.

I said, "For what? I don't think it is necessary. I'm just passing here to greet everyone."

"You are not supposed to leave without informing me."

"If I am doing something for ANC, yes, I can inform you, but this I was doing for my

union." Makiwane kept insisting that I was to tell him everything. After a while I lost patience with him, and I knew there was something wrong with this chap.

You see, some years after that, when the ANC sent guns from Lusaka to Botswana with Kanyile, Tennyson Makiwane gave information to the South Africans. That is when the South Africans co-operated with the police here, who went and took all the ANC guns before they tortured Kanyile.

A few months later, I saw Makiwane in town here, in the Gaborone mall. I never knew he was supposed to be coming. He just said he was going around, and didn't say anything about what the movement was doing. His eyes were just like a snake's eyes. Makiwane was a Xhosa and he was now working with this sell-out Matanzima in the Transkei. Matanzima ordered him to come and see him, and Makiwane stayed for three months in Mochudi. People from the Transkei went to see him there, about fourteen of them, including some kids. By this time I knew he was a spy, so I asked *Kgosi* Linchwe to help me get evidence about what he was doing in Mochudi. *Kgosi* Linchwe was just sending children to that compound to go and play and to listen to what those people were saying. We collected some good information, and sent it to Lusaka.

After that Makiwane went to stay in the Transkei. One day he was painting his house, a big house in Transkei that Matanzima gave him. Then two chaps, who were walking around, they called him, "Tennyson, Tennyson."

When he looked at them they put one bullet each in his head. When he fell, he said to his wife, "They killed me. Look after my kids."

People like Makiwane were fools. He thought it was possible to stop freedom with bullets, but he didn't know that if you kill the people one by one they still keep increasing faster than the sell-outs.

Family Life

Let me tell you that I was always working hard to increase party membership. When I came back to Botswana from South Africa I was married and became a family person having eleven children with my wife. I have many children, so if I die, I know I have left my seeds and they will continue to give birth.

When I came to Lobatse, there was one lady who came with me. We were in love but we were not married. Now my parents said, "You can't come with a lady like this. She is not a wife." Then my parents went to Moshupa and found me a wife there. It was in 1966. When Botswana was getting its independence I was losing my own independence. Now I have these babies here.

My wife is Joyce Keemenao Masibi. She went to Moeding College before we married. Now she is a teacher at a primary school, and she is a leader of the Boy Scouts in this area.

My first born is Seatla, born in 1967. He now works at the Molepolole College of Education. My oldest girl Thapelo, or Faith was second, and Bakang was the third, a tall one. The fourth is Tumi, who is now working at Bee Gees. Then I had seven more. Dimpho, another girl, and then a boy called Tebogo, who is training with BDF. I always mix their names. Setso is next, then Diphetogo, and another girl Dithunya Ontumetse. Then, two twin girls, Mpho and Mphoetsile. Eleven. The big ones always helped me raise the little ones. I have one grandson, Lerumo Fidel Kagiso, and a granddaughter Theo Tshiamo. When Lerumo was born in 1991 his mother was here only for seven days before she went to Harare for studies. So I was the one who was looking after him, while his grandmother was finishing school in Lobatse for the next two years.

Most of my children were born here in Gaborone. My eldest daughter was still young when we left Lobatse, though I had been staying here before. I was staying in Naledi, where people were getting plots then. I was asking where I can put my kids. I moved to White City, then to Extension 14, and then I got the plot in Bontleng where I stay now.

We used to sometimes have ANC meetings at this house. Usually I addressed meetings at Lobatse, which was hot. Later on we had meetings here. My plot was sort of an office. Sometimes we met at another person's place.

I have had so many problems with my children's education, because the government was giving me problems. When my first-born, Seatla, finished Form Three, there was a shortage of places. My wife and I were worried. We were going up and down, looking for a school which could take him for Form Four.

We found a place at Mochudi at the Secondary School there, but I had no money for school fees. I went to one guy, one of ours, to ask for money for fees. He gave me that cash, because comrades cannot forget each other; then I went to Motshidisi, borrowed his car, and took my son to his school.

After he finished his Form Five he went to do Tirelo Sechaba, his national service. After that he went to Polytechnic. In 1989 he got a scholarship to study at the College of St. Mark and St. John in England. Then, in 1992 he graduated with a degree. Now he is teaching at a College of Education. But while Seatla was progressing, it was difficult to send four of my children to school here. There were too many children, and there was no money. This is why I took them to Lusaka.

At Lusaka my comrades said I should bring the four to the ANC school at Morogoro,

in Tanzania. They said we can't let the families of our freedom fighters suffer in darkness. We ran into some difficulties on the way. When we got to the Zimbabwe-Zambia border the papers hadn't arrived and we couldn't get across.

Joshua Nkomo I used to know in Johannesburg, when he was still young. When he used to go there from Rhodesia, all the ANC Volunteers would go with him and surround him so that the police would not know which one is Nkomo. I used to do that. So then I met him again by Zambia, by the side of the Chirundu road, trying to cross the border. It was so hot, and I was supposed to cross the border with my children, but there were no papers allowing me to do so. We saw Nkomo there. He remembered me and greeted me. "Where are you going with these kids?" I told him my problem. Maybe he helped me by calling some people, and after that I crossed.

The Simon Mahlangu Freedom College at Morogoro was a wonderful school with big buildings, and lots of cattle and sheep. Morogoro mountain has lots of smoke on top, and you can't see the top. It is a very beautiful place. Everything was there for the ANC youth. If a child goes there, they don't like coming home. There was lots of food. You know these paintings, they put them all over the school—lions, and elephants, everything. They had big trucks, which used to go to the sea, and then load things, and bring them there.

After I left Morogoro, I nearly went inside Zaire, because I was lost. I didn't know these places up north, but I knew that I didn't want to go greet Mobutu. So I went back through Zambia and came home. That was my third time in Tanzania.

My children are now all here, but my parents are now dead. Also my brother Tholego passed away. My other brother Tshipa works in government. Before he was the chairman of the workers, but then they sacked him. My two sisters, Mosetsanagape and Sekawanyana, were married, but one is now widowed.

Today when I am looking at my family, I think that when I was young I did not have good ideas about what I should do. I was just behaving like most Africans, just doing a lot of very bad things. Today you like that one and sleep with them, and then tomorrow you love that other one. I used to do it, as well. I used to love, not marry. I used to think that it was something to be a gentleman wearing a nice suit, and seeing a wonderful girl. Then the next day I would take another one. This behaviour is a sin to God, and I don't like it anymore. We Africans must be more like Europeans, because they are very careful with God. They are not going up and down like us, changing their lovers all the time. I don't think so.

I haven't paid *lobola* yet to my wife's family. I must before I die. Now that I am getting old I want to have a proper *masimo* and cattlepost so I can leave something for

my children. Land and cattle remain when you are gone. I didn't have time for these things in the past. I would sometimes give my father a beast, but I didn't look after them. Now that my parents have passed away, I am thinking it might be time to go back to Kanye.

The Botswana National Front

Whereas in the early 1960s he had played an important role in the BPP, BIP, and BTUC, after 1965 Keitseng became a founder Central Committee member of the Botswana National Front (BNF), which was formed by Kenneth Koma in 1965-66. Keitseng covers a few of his experiences with the BNF, which has long been the country's main opposition.

The Front was slow to become an organised force in the country, after emerging from the ashes of the BPP split and the BDP's overwhelming victory in the 1965 election. The party first won seats in the 1969 election, when Keitseng's conservative *Kgosi*, Bathoeñ II, resigned from his chieftaincy and became leader of the BNF. At this point Koma stood back for him.

In this account, however, Keitseng only alludes to what others claim was his most valuable contribution—frustrating the attempts of South African agents to take over the BNF. For example, in 1972, South African agents offered money and other inducements in an attempt to coopt the movement's most conservative members—chiefly Bathoeñ's conservative rural faction. In this way the apartheid regime hoped to turn the BNF into a "Botswana National Party" that would openly advocate a closer relationship between Botswana and the homeland of Bophutataswana.[107] Koma was warned of this conspiracy by Keitseng, who helped him rally the membership versus the conspirators. Mr Koma was able to figure out what was happening, since he could use both his ANC and tribal contacts to gather information. He recalls:

Another important event in which Fish Keitseng played a key role was at the 1972 BNF conference in Lobatse. What happened was that two Afrikaners approached Chief Bathoeñ promising to finance the BNF into power in the 1974 general elections. They would provide vehicles for every constituency and tell all the petrol filling stations to supply fuel for the vehicles. They would also provide money for the BNF election campaign as well as money for putting up offices for the BNF on the following conditions: (a) that Koma resign from the leadership of the BNF (b) that the BNF agree to recognise the Homelands or Bantustans, and (c) that the BNF change its name, to be renamed the Botswana National Party (like the Basotho National Party in Lesotho).

The BNF conference nearly split on this issue as there were some leaders who tried to persuade the conference that the wise thing to do would be to pretend to agree with the conditions in order to receive the financial assistance and later return to the party line. Fish Keitseng, along with myself and Lenyeletse Koma...opposed the offer on the Central Committee. At first only the youth were mostly supporting us in rejecting the conditions, but ultimately the majority of the conference delegates rejected the conditions. As usual the BNF entered the 1974 general election without funds and lost.[108]

By the late 1970s the Front had emerged as the leading opposition party, as Matante's BPP became a mere regional force. In the 1980s the BNF won significant numbers of seats, particularly in urban areas. Keitseng remained an active supporter of the Front, being both a respected father figure and a star freedom square orator. But he never stood as a party candidate until 1989, when he became a city councillor in Gaborone. He relates some stories of his days on the council, from which he resigned recently due to ill health.

"I can remember very well when the BNF started. Koma came back from Russia, and he was opposing the BDP. He wrote letters to Matante, Motsete, and Mpho, saying "Why don't you guys come together, because Seretse is very strong? You can't afford to be as divided as you are if you want to defeat him." All of them refused, because I think they were afraid of his standard of education.

When he came from Russia,[109] after going home to Mahalapye, he came straight to my home in Lobatse on the train. He was thin then, that chap, very thin. I didn't recognise him at first, because he looked just like a little boy. He was hoping to form a United Front, which we were talking about in Moscow when I went there. So I was helping him by introducing him to other comrades.

All the chiefs wanted Koma to be something for them, but these guys and other people in the opposition refused to come together when Koma called meetings. One time, Mpho was coming for a meeting, but Matante refused. Koma tried many times to bring everybody together by holding these conferences, but Matante and Mpho just were afraid that he was too dignified.

After these leaders never came, Koma called another meeting in Mochudi to form the National Front. We went to Mochudi because *Kgosi* Linchwe was very interested in working with Koma. I went to Mochudi with some people in a Land Rover.

When we got there, we found Bathoeñ's son, Seepapitso, at Pilane, who came there also with eight of his own guys and was starting his own party, called the Botswana National Union. Some of my guys were with him, like Tshane and Mosepele, and I was

a bit angry with them. These chaps were trying to join this chap because he was son of a chief. They were just thinking of the tribe, saying I should be with them because I am a Mongwaketse. They insulted me as we passed.

Then we went to the meeting, which we held at the community centre. *Kgosi* Linchwe was the chairman, but he was not happy because of what Seepapitso was doing. We formed our party on that day. Motshidisi joined us at that time with the workers. Koma was very influential, even though he is a very quiet chap. He speaks very slowly, and sometimes you don't understand his point immediately. But he and *Kgosi* Linchwe were very important that day in starting the BNF.

On that day, when we were finished, by the *kgotla*, Seepapitso and these guys from Kanye were standing around, seeing what was happening with us. Then they asked Kgosi Linchwe where they could go to the toilet.

He told them, "You are coming to piss in our place."

Everybody laughed at Seepapitso. On the way back I picked some of these guys up. They were arguing with me the whole way, but they were blinded by chieftainship. I was hearing that Seepapitso was getting some financial support from a Boer called Klopper—one of these funny friends of Lucas Mangope. He was trying to gain the votes of the Bangwaketse. But he failed, his party just died before it ever started. You could have placed its membership in one Land Rover.

At first, all the chiefs except Linchwe were scared of Koma, and so was Bathoeñ. Afterwards he wasn't. Then he resigned from chieftainship and became the President of the BNF, because he was opening his eyes and seeing what was taking place. Bathoeñ and Koma were not different. Koma knew that BNF was facing a difficult task with Seretse, so he knew that we needed Bathoeñ. After Bathoeñ joined us for the 1969 election, we won three seats in Kanye. Before that, Bathoeñ was a real coward but he became strong in the party.

When Bathoeñ became the President of the BNF, the Boers were offering him money and everything. This Boer, Klopper, was again there, offering money. They wanted to make the party have another name, so that it could be like the party of Matanzima or Mangope. Chaps like Tshane were holding meetings saying, "We must follow our chief."

But I said, "No, we cannot take this line. This is what we have been fighting." Koma was Secretary-General, but he did not know what was happening. I warned him. We had a big meeting in Lobatse. In the end Bathoeñ, even though he was working with the Boers against the BPP long before, now refused to just be a sell-out.

Let me tell you how Bathoeñ came to separate from the government when he was still our *Kgosi*. Bathoeñ had been clashing with Seretse ever since Seretse married that white lady, Ruth. Even though Seretse was president and Bathoeñ was just a chief, Bathoeñ thought that Seretse was a young boy and did not take orders from him.

So one day Seretse sent Masire to tell Bathoeñ his time as *Kgosi* was over. Bathoeñ told Masire he must go to hell. When Seretse was told Masire was insulted, I think Seretse got advice from these Europeans in the police. Then he went to Kanye and called Bathoeñ to come and talk to him. Bathoeñ didn't want to listen and didn't go. Then Seretse wanted to deport Bathoeñ to Ghanzi. That is what we Bangwaketse were hearing. So Seretse called Bathoeñ to meet him at State House, to tell him this news. Bathoeñ came alone with his driver, though he was supposed to bring five people there. Seretse had five Europeans there, policemen and others, so that they could talk very hard to Bathoeñ. When he arrived at Gaborone and found Seretse and these Europeans there, Bathoeñ said, "Why have I been called here?"

Seretse said, "Well, you can park now. Go to that house, you can eat there."

"Look, I'm going to bring my driver along."

"We don't need your driver."

"I cannot eat without my driver." Then Bathoeñ just left Seretse there and returned to Kanye.

After that, the government announced that there was a *kgotla* meeting in Kanye. I left Lobatse—it was a Wednesday morning. Many people came. There were so many that we went to meet at the football grounds. We sat there to wait, and then Bathoeñ's brother came. He said the chief was not well, but was coming soon. Then Bathoeñ came, and he greeted us.

He said that he was resigning and was no longer chief. "I have got information that I will be deported to Ghanzi by the government. I don't want you people here to be angry for me. If it happened to me it can happen to anybody. Nobody will stop it." Then he told us how badly Seretse was treating him, and the people became very angry. As he was finishing, Seretse arrived, coming with seven Land Rovers. Bathoeñ said, "The son of Khama is coming, he is nearby."

Seretse came and gave Bathoeñ a letter. Bathoeñ took it but he didn't read this piece of paper. He said to the people, "I told you that I am no longer *kgosi*. If you want to know why, I heard this from the wind." People were starting to cry, man.

Seretse was just standing there, listening to Bathoeñ. He said to the *kgotla*, "I am very, very sorry. When I went to Johannesburg a certain day, I could not go and talk to your chief. So I sent Masire to *Kgosi* Bathoeñ in my place but Bathoeñ didn't listen to

anything he said. He is refusing to co-operate with the government. Now I am sorry, because when I arrive I find that Bathoeñ is no more *kgosi*. Bathoeñ was working very well with my uncle, Tshekedi, to run this country so that we could take over this country from the British. But now he must not sit in this *kgotla* any more."

Then, when he stopped, Bathoeñ stood up. "I won't come in this *kgotla* any more as a Chief. I'll come as a Mongwaketse. I don't want the Chieftainship any more."

So Seretse could no longer deport Bathoeñ. What was the use?

At that meeting, I was raising my hands and trying to talk, but they tried to say I must keep quiet. When Masire stood up to talk, I said, "You, sit down! I don't want to talk to you, I want to talk to this gentleman." I faced Seretse.

"Look *Kgosi* Seretse, you say *Kgosi* Bathoeñ is bad and that he has done many bad things. We here, the Bangwaketse, we never knew that our chief is bad. You are the only person saying that. You yourself were sent to school by your uncles, Tshekedi and Bathoeñ. But our *Kgosi* never told you that you must go and marry this white woman here. You did it on your own. Then when you returned with her to Gammangwato two policemen were killed there because of the disturbances you created there. The government said you were causing trouble then, but the people stood with you, now you say your uncle Bathoeñ is causing trouble, but the people stand with him. Nobody has been killed here, we have always been living in peace."

Hey! Mma Khama said no one should listen to me and one policeman was telling me to keep quiet! Some old women next to me were saying I had no respect for our *Tautona*. I said, "Let me talk. You don't know anything, you people." I was shouting at Seretse, and I continued howling and people were listening until they closed the meeting.

Then Bathoeñ left, and we went and surrounded him outside. He said he didn't know what he was going to do, but he joined the BNF. During the election he was quickly made the party president. We were told we had just two days to collect one thousand signatures to nominate a president. We went to Kanye and did it in a few hours. These election officials were just playing games. Anyhow, this is how Bathoeñ came to be BNF President, because we could easily get signatures in Kanye for him.

Not long after that, one day when I was working, a policeman came to talk in the office. Then later, another one came on a bicycle. After that, this policeman Sheppard, who was guarding Seretse in Kanye, came and I saw him go to talk to the foreman in the office, a Portuguese guy.

Then, that day, my foreman told me that he was laying me off. The next day, I went and found that guy Sheppard near the police station. I said, "Good morning, Mr. Sheppard, I want to talk to you. You know that three weeks ago, Mr. Russell England

was murdered here by criminals, but you didn't arrest them. But me, because I am working for my children, you have caused me to be sacked from my job."

He said, "Keitseng, you are always shouting at my men. Let's go in the office." Then I gave a statement to another white policeman. When I left, I said to Sheppard, "You are no good for this country."

This chap Sheppard, first he worked with the British, then for Seretse, and then later I heard he went elsewhere to Hong Kong or someplace far away. He worked like this because when you hunt animals and they become finished in one place, you must go to another area to shoot them.

The government was just harassing me, but I kept supporting BNF. I respected our leader, Dr. Koma, very much. We became more popular every year. Even not long ago, I heard him say something which I very much agree with. He said, "A person who is leading the people somewhere can lead, but if he does not take care they will turn against him if he does not do things the proper way. The best way to lead is to tell the people the truth. So we mustn't be disappointed if we do not take power immediately, because if we tell the people the truth we will be successful in the end." This is what the BNF has been doing for a long time.

Dr. Koma doesn't speak so much. He'll start slow, but later on he speeds up and gets hot. He knows how to make a point, and he doesn't insult people in meetings. Now those things which he has been saying for a long time are coming true. If you read Pamphlet No. 10, "Chieftainship in Crisis", you'll see that it is all coming true now.

One time Koma went with me to Zambia and Malawi. I was going there to see the ANC about a dispute over the ANC properties in Gaborone that I was looking after.[110] Koma was supporting me, but he also wanted to go and see a friend of his who was living on Likoma Island in Lake Malawi. We arrived at the lake about five o'clock and got on the boat. It was such a big lake. We did not get to the island until the following morning. It was a lovely place, and people come from all over, from Europe and America, to see it. Dr. Koma's friend was not there, so we stayed for some days to wait for him. When he came he helped us. This man is a priest of one of the African faith healing churches who was going to help the BNF.

I never tried to become an official with the BNF after independence. It was only in 1989, when I was an old man, that I became a member of the Gaborone City Council. In fact on the day I was nominated by the BNF I was not even thinking about becoming a councillor, as I am not well educated. The people forced me to be a councillor.

On the day the BNF was nominating councillors for my part of Gaborone I went to the meeting which was at Ithuteng Primary School Hall, in the teachers' room.

I just wanted to support anybody who was selected by the people. When I got there I found people asking for nominations for councillors. One chap, Knox Kowa was called, because he was already a councillor. But the people didn't support him, and even his wife didn't stand up for him.

Then there was another Mokgatla, and then another chap, and two others. Then my name was called. I said, "Why are you calling me? I don't want to become a councillor."

The party people said, "Old man, they called your name. The people will decide, not you." So we went out of the room so that they could vote. When we went back in I found that I had become a councillor.

"Old man. We know you, you must become a councillor."

You know what I think about being elected? Working in South Africa, working in the mines, working for the unions and the ANC, and being arrested so many times, it meant that very nice food was cooked. You know what I mean? That is why the people wanted me. People say I am a very good speaker. When I get off the platform, everyone shakes my hand. I never attack the people, but I just try to give them good information so that they can help themselves. I try to give them something so that each and every one shall know what we the BNF want. I never make speeches against anybody, black or white.

After that I was on the council, until 1994. In the council it was very, very nice, because the BNF was the majority. But we didn't fight too much and allowed those six others from the BDP to be involved. I attended all the council meetings, bringing some suggestions about what we should do in my area. I am very glad today to say that one motion was adopted, because in one section of my area it was too dark, and when people walked there at night they were being eaten by some criminals. So I called for lights to be made in that area, from Old Naledi to this other garages where these people were being attacked. Today I see the lights there and I feel good.

What I remember about being on the council is that we used to go to certain places on trips, sometimes in Botswana and sometimes outside. For a Motswana, I have been to many places. I think the first trip was to Maun, which I didn't know. We went to see crocodile farming and also Moremi Game Reserve, where we found a lot of game—elephants, lions, and all kinds of animals. On another day we took small aeroplanes to see Tsodilo Hills. It was interesting, as I saw all kinds of animals from the sky.

Tsodilo Hills is okay, but I enjoyed going down to the Basarwa village there. Those people, they really knew how to do it, dancing and playing for us. They were very happy. They were not starving, but we were looking for some little money to give them.

We spent about five days there. Maun is very nice, except that there is too much sand, if you have a car there. We were staying in the nice hotel there. We even went to

the BNF meeting at the *kgotla* there. I went to see Mpho at his house, because he never came to greet us. I found him in his bottle store, which was well packed. I was still glad to see my old comrade again, but I did not get satisfaction because he still has some ill feeling in his heart toward me.

Another time we decided to go to Lesotho. I really enjoyed seeing their big dam which they were building among these big mountains. They said that ever since God created their country, their water had been going to South Africa, but now they were trying to dam the water and sell it to them. Those people are going to get a lot of money. That dam is very nice, and now the South Africans cannot cheat these people any more.

In Lesotho, those people can drive. Good God! You go up those hills, going around, until you reach the top of high hills and mountains. If you go down, you must go slowly, because there are lots of corners. I went to Thaba Bosigo where we were told all about how Moshoeshoe had fought. He was a true freedom fighter in his day.

On another trip we went to Cape Town, by buses. It was the first time I saw it, and it is a wonderful place. I was very pleased to be a councillor to travel and see different places which I didn't know before. When we went there South Africa was still under apartheid, but they welcomed us very nicely anyway. We were going up and down, and went where the oceans met. We also went to Gugulethu Township, and it was so big and so dirty. Even in Botswana, we might be poor, but we cannot live as badly as that.

We were there for five days and I saw all Cape Town. Table Mountain impressed me. There was a big rope, pulled by an engine on top, or maybe on bottom, and we got in this thing, about the size of this room, a cable car. We stood up and went up the mountain. In this car if you look down, you must close your eyes. We were very scared, because if we fell down, what was going to happen? We saw some big and very dangerous stones on the side of the mountain. When we got to the top, we saw all the seas around the mountain. We saw everything. We saw the island where Mandela was—Robben Island. I saw where my comrade had been suffering. There were also lot of animals there, meercats. They would just come up to you and look for food. They were fat, and just wonderful.

We had four trips, and we were enjoying them. It was good to be a councillor, and I was glad that people had elected me. The only bad thing which happened was when I was at the end of my time. Some of the councillors from the Front caused mischief by voting against our Mayor, Paul Rantao. I told them that they could not defeat the party, they could only defeat themselves. These chaps ignored me and just voted for a Domkrag guy. Today, the BNF is back in power on the council and these chaps are just walking on the streets.

In 1994 I could no longer be on the council as I was getting sick. Now I am sick, and I can no longer run up and down like I used to. This is not my body, and my trousers are too big now. Even though I am sick, the people in this area still call me "father". They say, "this man is our father." Even now when I am no longer an official, they come and report their difficulties to me, because they know I don't make favourites. I take the people as I take myself and I treat them as I treat the children of my wife.

As for today I am still in the ANC, even though I'm in BNF. I joined the ANC in 1948, and I am staying with them ANC even today when they are now the ruling party and I will stay with them until the end of oppression. The ANC won the struggle through ordinary people like myself. That is why Mandela kept asking to see me when he came here after his release. The government was pretending not to know me, but Rantao told Mandela where I was. So people came to take me to him at the Gaborone Sun. Some of the whites there just jumped when we were yelling "Comrade, Comrade!" I have seen Mandela at other times as well, with his Ministers. Today South Africa is blessed with straightforward leaders. In a war against oppression people end up seeing who are the true leaders and who are the rascals and sell-outs.

I am waiting to get a pension from South Africa, which I have applied for as a former member of Umkhonto. We now have an organisation called ASABO, South Africa-Botswana Association, which is organising these things. I am working with them to identify the Freedom Fighters this side, ANC, PAC and others. We do not want to leave anyone out. I did fight in that war and my family should now be getting some money from the ANC after I die.

Today I am happy because Africa is free. I am taking off my hat to my fellow comrades, including these young fellows who came after me. When I was in the struggle I was hoping but not knowing when we would achieve freedom for Africa. Today all of Africa is free because we did it together.

Appendix

The origins of this book lay in two articles that Barry Morton wrote for *Botswana Gazette* newspaper in 1994. Materials for the manuscript came from dozens of hours of interviews, conducted in Gaborone in December 1996 and January 1997. The interviews were then transcribed, and events were placed in thematic and chronological order.

We also obtained valuable further information from Dr. Kenneth Koma, Michael Dingake, Motsamai Mpho, Rica Hodgson and Brian Egner. Many thanks to them all.

We would also like to express our thanks to those who aided us in the course of this project: Gilbert Mpolokeng, the Archives staff and Neil Parsons.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER ONE

[11] BNA OP H. 75/1 vol II.
[12] I. Schapera, *Ethnic Composition of the Tswana Tribes* (London: LMS, 1953), p. 43.
[13] We cannot be absolutely sure of this date, but this is the one known to members of the Keitseng family. Gail Gerhart & Thomas Karis in *From Protest to Challenge a Documentry History of African Politics in South Africa, vol 4: Political Profiles 1882-1964* (Hoover Press 1977) p. 49, give the date as 1919, while Keitseng's "Omang" or national indentity card and passport put the date at 1923. Such discrepancies are normal for men of his era.
[14] See Barry Morton and Jeff Ramsay, *The Making of a President*: *Sir Ketumile Masire's Early Years*, pp 14-15. Masire, who was Botswana's second president, and who was born in Kanye not many years after Keitseng, is an interesting comparative case to Keitseng. They are political contemporaries, and the only two Bangwaketse for whom we have
biographical accounts.
[15] Bathoeñ I (1845-1910), ruled 1889-1910, and his son Seepapitso II (1884-1916), ruled 1910-16, are generally remembered as strong progressive chiefs. Both were articulate

opponents of the Bechuanaland Protectorate's possible incorporation into neighbouring white settler dominated states and played supporting roles in the 1909 South African Native Convention and 1912 formation of the South African Native National Congress.

[16] Bathoeñ II (1909-1990) Chief of the Bangwaketse 1928-69. In the latter year he abdicated as Chief to become a leading member of the opposition Botswana National Front. In 1985 he retired from active politics to become the first President of Botswana's Customary Court of Appeal.

[17] This is true. Sir Ketumile Masire's family on his mother's side were related to the Modisenyane family.

[18] He is here referring to the 1896-7 rinderpest epidemic, which killed roughly 90% of all cattle in the Protectorate.

[19] A porridge made out of sorghum. The main staple of the Batswana diet until the 1930s, when it began losing ground to maize meal.

[20] Richard Montshiwa Rowland (1879-1945) appeared to most Bangwaketse as white but was discriminated against by white society due to his mixed racial descent. He became the leading businessman in southern Botswana and was a confident of three generations of Bangwaketse chiefs.

[21] The classic study of this remains I. Schapera *Migrant Labour and Tribal Life: A Study of Conditions in the Bechuanaland Protectorate* (London: Oxford University Press: 1947). On difficulties in calculating the extent of migration see: J. Ramsay "The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty of South-Central Botswana, 1820-1940" (unpublished 1991 Boston University doctoral thesis) pp. 252-264.

[22] South African mines recruited its labour using the contract system - young men in the countryside would usually sign up for a contract of between nine months and one year, and would be transported to and from the mines by a recruiting agency - in this case the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC).

[23] The *golofana* was an underground method of transporting ores, and involved men pushing small carts full of gold ore on train tracks. It was generally considered to be the hardest mine work. Those who performed this job were often called "tramps".

[24] Hut Tax, which in 1940 amounted to a little over £1 a year. The colonial government worked with the labour recruiting organisations to assure that a portion of the migrant workers' wages were remitted as tax payments.

[25] Mother's senior brother, the uncle who traditionally played the largest part in a person's life.

[26] See D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa "The Protectorate and World War II" in F. Morton & J. Ramsay (edit.) *The Birth of Botswana*, pp. 102-109.

[27] This observation is supported by others. Masire, for instance, had a few vitriolic public exchanges with Bathoeñ, but the two had many fruitful discussions in private meetings. Bathoeñ was rather vain about being given proper respect in public gatherings.

[28] According to other Bangwaketse elders Fish should be a member of the Maletamotse regiment that was formed in 1940.

CHAPTER TWO

[29] John Kgaona Nkadimeng was a prominent unionist and ANC activist during the 1950s, serving on the executives of the Transvaal ANC and various affiliated unions. CNETU, SACTU, before becoming a Treason Trial defendant. Like Fish he was a factory worker who became politically involved through his union activities. He subsequently became the Secretary-General of SACTU in exile, serving on the ANC's National Executive Committee.
[30] Seretse Khama (1921-80) was heir to the Bangwato throne in 1948 when he caused a sensation by marrying Ruth Williams while studying in London. Under South African and Southern Rhodesian pressure the British had Seretse exiled. He subsequently served, 1966-80, as Botswana's first President- see N. Parsons, W. Henderson and T. Tlou *Seretse Khama* 1921-1980 (Gaborone: MacMillan Boleswa & Botswana Society, 1995).
[31] Tshekedi Khama (1905-59) regent of the Bangwato 1925-49 for his nephew Seretse Khama, during which time he was the most influential figure in the Protectorate.

CHAPTER THREE

[32] The name was coined and popularised by reports in the left leaning newspaper New Age, then edited by Govan Mbeki.
[33] This became an issue after the 1952 Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act, which made provision for black women to carry passes. In 1955-56, when the government tried to implement it, the ANC and other organisations fought against the measure. The following incident took place in April and May 1955.
[34] Rev. Trevor Huddleston (1913-98) Leading anti-apartheid clergyman during the 1950s, he was recalled to England in 1956 and subsequently declared a prohibited immigrant by the South African government. In England he was a founder and remained active in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The event described below, the Congress of the People, , took place on the 25-26th June 1955.
[35] Dr. James S. Moroka was elected in 1949 as the President-General of the ANC with the support of radical Youth League leaders such as Mandela and Sisulu. In 1952 he was replaced by Chief Albert Lutuli after dissociating himself from other ANC leaders after being charged under the Suppression of Communism Act during the Defiance Campaign.
[36] The leader of the ANC aligned Federation of South African Woman, who led the famous women's march to Pretoria in August 1956.
[37] This view of Newclare, along with adjacent Western Area communities, is supported by other observers, see for example T. Lodge *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London: Longman, 1983) pp. 97-100.

[38] The March 1958 National Workers Conference
[39] In late June 1959.

CHAPTER FOUR

[40] Keitseng lost all his money and documents in his scuffle with the police.
[41] Robert Mweli Resha was, until his death in 1973, a prominent ANC activist. In June 1961 he fled South Africa, via Serowe, to become a senior figure for the ANC in exile.
[42] Michael Dingake, who was in the crowd, recalls that the police fired over the heads of the demonstrators- interview January 9, 1997.
[43] Abram Louis "Bram" Fischer. From a prominent Afrikaner family, he became one of South Africa's top corporate lawyers notwithstanding his active membership in the Communist Party. He led the defence team at the 1964 Rivonia Trial, until his own arrest in September 1964. In 1966 he was sentenced to life imprisonment for "conspiracy to commit sabotage". He was released under house arrest shortly before his death in 1975.
[44] A predominately Basotho criminal gang that was active for many years in the Western Areas. By 1956 many supposed Russians had been co-opted to break up ANC boycott activities.
[45] Oswald Pirow had held several cabinet portfolios before the Second World, when he openly aligned himself with Nazi Germany. He died in 1961 while still prosecuting the Treason Trial.

CHAPTER FIVE

[46] See for instance, J. Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), Ch. 1. Dingake, *My Fight Against Apartheid*, pp. 86-88 and Wolpe *The Long Way Home,* pp. 238-254.
[47] Jack Hodgson was an ex- World War II veteran and member of the Springbok Legion. After the war he joined the Communist Party and later led the Congress of Democrats. Because of his military experience, he was drafted into the MK and engaged in sabotage in 1961-62. His wife Rica, was a left wing activist and fund-raiser. They fled to Bechuanaland in early 1963 in order to establish a farm at Lobatse to serve as an MK facility. Their stay in the Protectorate was controversial, as they had to fight deportation orders, and they eventually moved north. Interview with Rica Hodgson, Durban, April 1998. Further details contained in BNA OP H 196/ 11 "Hodgsons and Harmel".
[48] BNA OP H 196/13 III "Movement of suspected saboteurs through BP", enclosed in Chief of Police to Government Secretary, 22 February 1963.
[49] Dan Tloome was a prominent union, ANC and Communist Party activist throughout the 1940s and 50s. In Lusaka he served as the ANC's Auditor-General. A June 1965 intelligence report identifies him as the ANC leader in B.P. and a member

of the MK noting that his "smuggling of saboteurs" has attracted the interest of the South African Police- BNA OP I/6/2992 ex. SP 37/5-I.

[50] Howard Barrell MK: the ANC's Armed Struggle (London: Penguin, 1990) pp. 18-30. BNA OP I/8/3034 ex. 30/4 II Central Intelligence Summary for May 1970.

[51] Lester's animals were well known in the Protectorate, and the government press regularly displayed pictures of his leopards in its publications in the early 1960s.

[52] Jobe James Hadebe (1923-) Another former Treason Trialist, from 1961 he was the ANC representative for Egypt and East Africa. Along with Modise he had helped set up the pipeline on behalf of the ANC.

[53] The DC in Lobatse in c.1963-66. His "hostile attitude" is also described by Kasrils in Armed and Dangerous, p. 77, while Rica Hodgson remembers him as "a pig and very stupid".

[54] Philip Steenkamp was Francistown DC 1962-67. After independence he served for many years as Seretse Khama's Permanent Secretary.

[55] Apparently Robert Wishart Brownlow, an accountant who lived in Lobatse. He was part of a larger committee overseeing the dispersal of financial support to refugees from the mid 1960s.

[56] The nurses arrived in 1960, but moved to Serowe until January 1962, when they finally left for Tanganyika. Oliver Tambo accompanied by Congress of Democrats member Ronald Segal, later joined by Yusaf Dadoo of the South African Indian Congress, also passed through Bechuanaland on their way to Tanganyika in 1960, where they formed the nucleus of the ANC's external wing. Because of security concerns in Lobatse they too were moved to Serowe where they were hosted by Seretse Khama's cousin and future Botswana Vice-President Lenyeletse Seretse (1920-83) BNA Divisional Commissioner North 9/2: Francistown and Ngwato District Tergos Reports April 1960; and 9/3 Francistown and Ngwato District Intelligence Reports April 1960.

[57] Mandela's version of this story, which is quite similar, is found in *Long Walk to Freedom,* pp. 343-4. These events took place in February 1962.

[58] By September 1962 British security believed that Joe Matthews was in overall charge of the movement of ANC refugees in Southern Africa- BNA OP H 196/13 III "Movement of suspected saboteurs through BP." He later became a citizen of Botswana, where he practised law. In 1982 he fled the country after being indicted for embezzlement. He subsequently re-emerging in South Africa as a prominent member of the Inkatha Freedom Party, in 1994 becoming a Deputy Minister in the Government of National Unity.

[59] Zachariah Keodireleng Matthews (1901-1968) Prominent post World War II academic and ANC activist, in 1966 he was appointed by Seretse Khama as Botswana's first ambassador to the United Nations and United States, see *Freedom For My People: The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews: Southern Africa 1901 to 1968.* Edited by M. Wison (London: Rex Collings, 1981). Some of his private papers are at Moeding College and the Botswana National Archives.

[60] In March 1997 a former S.A.P. warrant officer, Wouter Mentz, confirmed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that he had been part of a death squad, led by former Vlakplaas commander Eugene de Kock, who had murdered Sam Chand and three other members of his family at their Sikwane home in April 1990. Mentz's testimony confirmed 1994 testimony by another former member of the S.A.P., Willie Nortje, before the Goldstone Commission. It was also alleged before the Commission that Chand was at the time of his assassination a paid agent of the Directorate of Covert Collection (DCC), a unit within the South African Department of Military *Intelligence. But, this allegation is disputed.*

[61] Mandela's version of the events below is in *Long Walk to Freedom*, pp. 364-5.

[62] Herbert Bartuane, a German pilot, reputedly ex-Luftwaffe , who in 1961 moved to Lobatse as the Director of Bechuanaland Safaris Ltd. later Bechuanaland Air Services. Capital for Bartuane's company was raised by the BP government and Cyril Huvitz, a prominent local businessman. Bartaune played a prominent role in flying refugees out of Swaziland and Botswana during the 1960s, but apparently considered himself to be apolitical "taxi driver". His duties also involved him in ferrying such personalities as Lord Malvern, Ian Smith and Dag Hammarskjold- BNA Divisional Commissioner North 9/2 Tergos Report for February 1961 and private communications.

[63] The pilot's name was Mildenhall, while the identities of the three additional passengers were Mary Mayosi, Moti Ranku and Richard Tlala, all relatively junior SACTU activists. SACTU paid for the flight, apparently fronting for the ANC. The flight was booked by Keitseng and Matlou on 14 July 1962, for 20 July 1962. This information was communicated to the District Special Branch Officer (Innes-Ker, see below), who immediately suspected that the return flight would be carrying "either Joe Matthews, Nelson Mandela, or possibly both"- BNA OP H 196/6 VIII "Refugees April-November 1962", Savinggram ST.9 vol II (36) Chief of Police to Government Secretary 20 July 1962.

[64] Brian Egner, interviewed 1 August 1997, who as Chobe District Commissioner played a role in covert British support for the movement of refugees, recalls Webber as being a security risk who had to be kept out of the loop. Kasrils also has negative memories of him, *Armed and Dangerous*, p. 78.

[65] In *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 363, Mandela recalls that his Ethiopian military instructor, Colonel Tadesse "presented me with a gift: an automatic pistol and two hundred rounds of ammunition."

[66] During this period Peter Cardross-Grant at Gaborone, rather than his Lobatse counterpart, Bail, appears to have been entrusted with matters involving the movement of A.N.C. personnel through Botswana. As the Southern Divisional Special Branch Officer Inspector Innes-Ker was then the senior police intelligence officer in southern Botswana - BNA OP I/6/2983 ex. H. 75/1 VI.

[67] Mandela and Fish landed at Kanye airport in the evening of 23 July 1962. According to Mandela he, accompanied by Cecil Williams, reached the secret ANC

headquarters at Liliesleaf farm, Rivonia on the morning of the 24th. They were not arrested until 5 August while leaving Durban.

[68] See above note no. 47. The Hodgsons arrived in April 1963.

[69] The Landrover was registered in Fish Keitseng's name as BFP 320 on 20 July 1963. It had been reportedly purchased by the ANC for £ 2950- BNA OP 196/11.

[70] BNA OP I/6/2992 ex. SP 37/5-I, document on personal details of refugees of importance dated 2 June 1965, confirms the Horace Themba Mathiso, then supposedly representing the ANC in Francistown had not been allowed out of Bechuanaland because the ANC suspected that he had been "turned" by the South African Police.

[71] These events are further documented in BNA OP H 196/6 VIII "Refugees April-November 1962".

[72] See Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages* , pp, 34-36. These events are further documented in BNA OP H 196/12 "Wolpe, Goldriech & Moola Moosa".

[73] Some additional details of the following events can be found in *Autobiography of Motsamai Mpho*, pp. 85-7.

[74] There is so far no firm evidence in this case about who might have betrayed Keitseng's party to the Rhodesians, though such circumstances as the parallel arrest of Mlonyeni have raised suspicions about Matante. When the students were to be flown out of the Protectorate, at the end of this episode, Matante supporters demonstrated against Motsamai Mpho in Francistown, after the latter had mobilised support for a plane to go there and fly out the students.

[75] Sir Edger Whitehead served as Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia 1958-62.

[76] In his autobiography Mpho, p. 85, claims he managed to contact the Serowe District Commissioner David Robinson, convincing him to arrange to have the Rhodesians removed.

[77] Rasebolai Khamane was the conservative regent of the Bangwato, 1953-64.

[78] See Wolpe, *The Long Way Home*, pp. 238-56.

[79] Two other ANC men, Mossie Moolla and Abdullah Jassat, also escaped during the incident. Moolla later passed through Botswana, with Keitseng arranging his transit to Tanganyika.

[80] This story has been confirmed by Michael Dingake, Gaborone 9 January 1997, a member of the ANC cell in charge of the escape.

[81] Keitseng cannot remember when this was during the Defiance Campaign. At a Newclare volunteers meeting that Keitseng was chairing, a police agent pretending to be a Volunteer stood up and demanded that all the police in attendance be killed. Then the police arrested every one in the room, including Keitseng. Wolpe succeeded in getting them off.

[82] Keitseng is probably referring here to Kenneth Abrahams, who was kidnapped in the Protectorate on his way to Lobatse, in August 1963. See Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages*, pp. 37-50. According to Michael Dingake a number of recruits were intercepted on their way from Johannesburg to Lobatse at this time, forcing MK to institute different routes to Keitseng's house in order to circumvent the police.

[83] A prominent BNF politician, Paul Rantao served as Gaborone mayor 1984-94, and as a Member of Parliament (1994-99).
[84] The bombing actually occurred on the 18th of September, while Julius First and his colleagues arrived in early October. Keitseng fails to mention that the government deported the Hodgsons on the 20th September, immediately after the bombings.
[85] On these events see Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous* , pp. 76-8.

CHAPTER SIX

[86] On Motsete, see Introduction.
[87] See *The Autobiography of Motsamai Mpho*, pp. 62-98.
[88] For a fully-footnoted account of the BPP split, written before Keitseng's testimony was acquired, see J. Ramsay, "The 1962 BPP Split," *Botswana Notes & Records* 25 (1993): pp. 79-88, originally published as a five part series in the Gaborone weekly paper Mmegi June-July 1992. See also: Benedict Banyani "The Political Career of Philip Gaonwe Matante" unpublished 1992 University of Botswana Bachelor of Arts History thesis.
[89] Archival documents show that, at least in August 1962, Motsete was passing information about ANC movements to the South African Police- BNA OP I/6/2983 ex. H. 75/1 VI.
[90] This meeting apparently occurred in late May or early June 1961- BNA OP I/6/2983 ex. H. 75/1 II.
[91] The following events took place in January 1962. Police documentation is in BNA OP I/5/2997 ex. H 181.
[92] This is a place where, according to Tswana custom, a mother and her newborn child were confined for three months, off limits to most visitors.
[93] Jimmy Allison was a colonial official who played a particularly prominent role in Botswana's transition to independence. After independence he stayed on for a period serving as the Permanent Secretary to Seretse before Steenkamp.
[94] Police intelligence files show that Matante deposited £5,000 transferred from Ghana to a Tanzania bank into his personal account in Francistown- BNA OP I/6/ 2983 "Known Financial Aid for B.P.P. from external sources: June 1961 to date" in BNA OP I/6/2983 ex. H. 75/1 V.
[95] This case took place on the 20th May. The BPP was seeking to overturn an injunction obtained by the Levitt Bros. against the boycotters. A copy of the Judgement "Levitt Brothers versus the Bechuanaland People's Party" in BNA OP I/6/ 2983 ex. H. 75/1 V.
[96] According to the Special Branch documents Matante and Mpho went to Ghana in June 1961, while Tlale was supposed to go but did not make it. Matante made a subsequent solo trip to Ghana in November 1961, and £5 000 of Ghanaian money was deposited into his Francistown bank account by February 1962, immediately prior to the purchase of the Land Rovers.

[97] "Cut the Chains"
[98] This was in February 1961.
[99] The following event took place on the 27th of June, shortly before the conference- see Ramsay "The 1962 BPP Split."
[100] These pro-Matante supporters were also announcing a meeting to be held the next morning at the BMC abattoir, according to police reports. This meeting aimed to exclude the pro-Mpho faction and the supporters of the Lobatse branch, who were due to meet in the afternoon. This explains why, in the subsequent narrative, Keitseng
went to the BMC.
[101] Keitseng describes this in the next chapter.
[102] Moutlakgola Nwako (1922-) Was a founder member of the BDP. He has held a number of Ministerial portfolios and was once considered to be a rival to Masire as Seretse's successor. Between 1989-99 he served as Speaker of the National Assembly.

CHAPTER SEVEN

[103] The following events, which took place in mid-1962, are described in *New Age*, 2 August 1962, and in BNA DC Kanye 17/6. the South African farmers were from the Nigel area.
[104] Dr. Kenneth Gaobamong Sholo Koma (1924), founder of the Botswana National Front. Since his return to Botswana in 1965, after a decade of studies in the U.K., Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. he has worked hard to forge an effective opposition to the long ruling BDP. His autobiography is forthcoming.
[105] These students were Seth Legwatagwate Makhamisa, Seth Sanofo Sitiko and Oreditse Sesome. See- BNA OP I/5/2977 ex. H. 181 Special Branch report dated 15 May 1964, which note that they left Bechuanaland on 28 August 1963. Makhamisa returned to head the Botswana General Workers Union and become a BNF founder.

CHAPTER EIGHT

[106] Simon Hirschfeldt and his brother Adolph, were the heads of the Botswana Police and its Criminal Investigation Department respectively. In 1996 it was alleged before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that they had been on Pretoria's payroll- an unsubstantiated charge they deny. Like many ANC activists in Botswana, Keitseng has nonetheless long looked upon them with suspicion.
[107] Another description of this attempt, by an insider, is M. Giddie "The Botswana National Front, is History repeating itself for a third time?" in the *Mirror* (Selibe-Phikwe), 24 April 1998.
[108] Dr. K. Koma, personal communication, received 23 January 1997.
[109] This was in 1965, and Koma's organising attempts took place in 1965-66.

[110] In the 1980s Keitseng had a long and divisive battle with Oupa Mokou, who had assumed the mantel of the ANC's representative in Botswana.

Fish Keitseng is an ordinary man who, through his unbending commitment to justice, made an extraordinary contribution to Southern Africa's liberation. Prosecuted in the famous South African Treason Trial, he was deported back to his native Botswana a few months before the Sharpsville Massacre that resulted in the ANC's banning and turn to armed struggle.

In the months that followed, he established and successfully ran an underground transit system for the ANC that secured the movement refugees through Botswana. This operation was of vital importance for it rescued thousands of freedom fighters, including Thabo Mbeki, from the clutches of the apartheid regime. This in turn allowed the ANC to re–establish itself in exile as a liberation movement ultimately capable of assuming state power. Keitseng's leading role in the liberation struggle might have been forgotten. Until apartheid's demise, it was not possible to draw attention to many of his deeds. Now that he is free to tell his story readers can discover a unique life that is worthy of remembrance.

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